LITTLE PRECIOUS

Child.....
Stories..
from the
Middle..
Kingdom

Myfanwy Lloyd
107, Raptor Rd
West Bridgford.
Notts.

"LITTLE PRECIOUS"

AND OTHER

Child Stories from the Middle Kingdom.

BY

LYDIA N. R. JACKSON,

Formerly C.E.Z.M.S., Lo-Nguong.

Illustrated by MYRA HERBERT.

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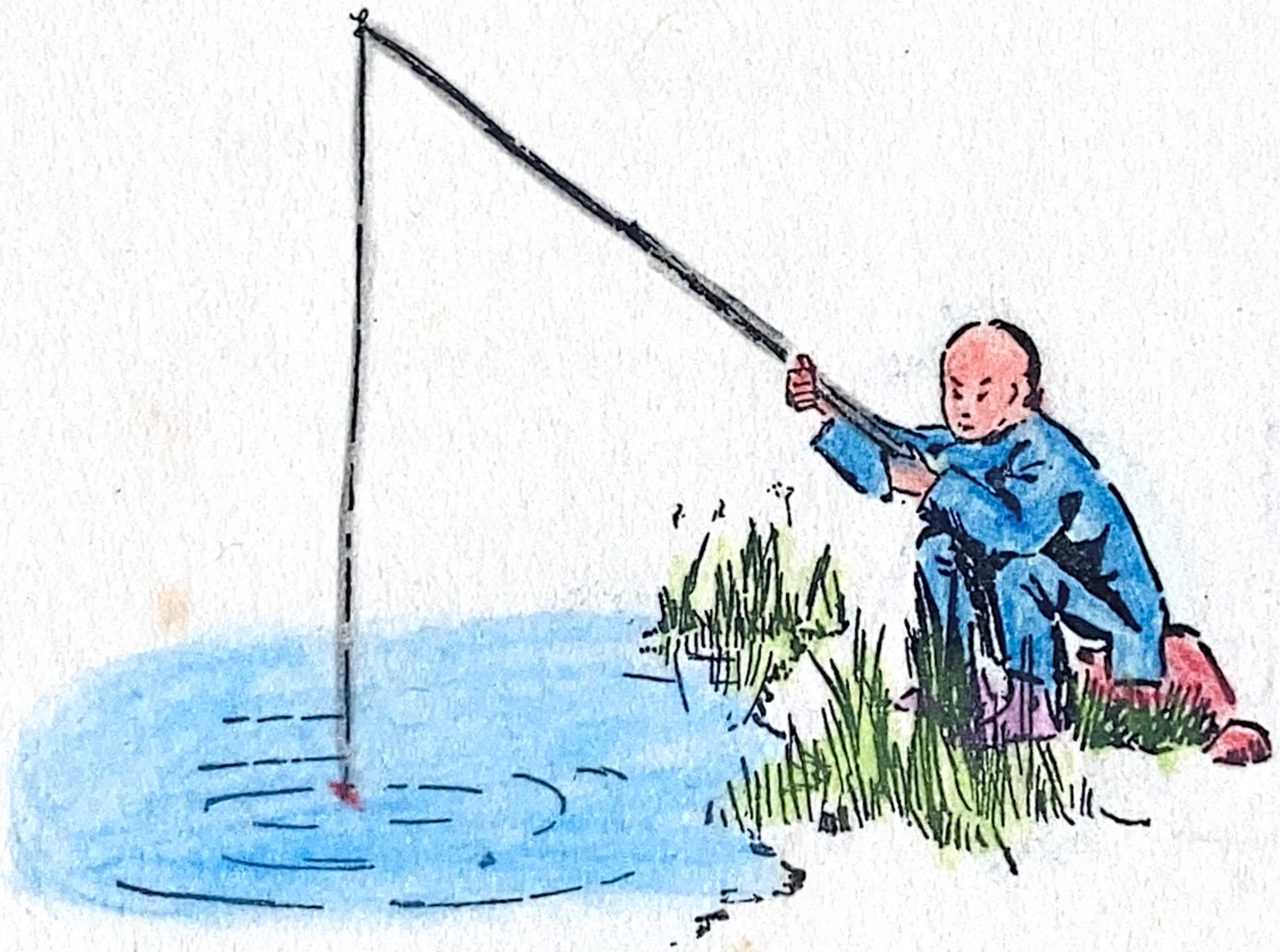

All the Stories in this Book are really and truly Stories about really and truly Children.

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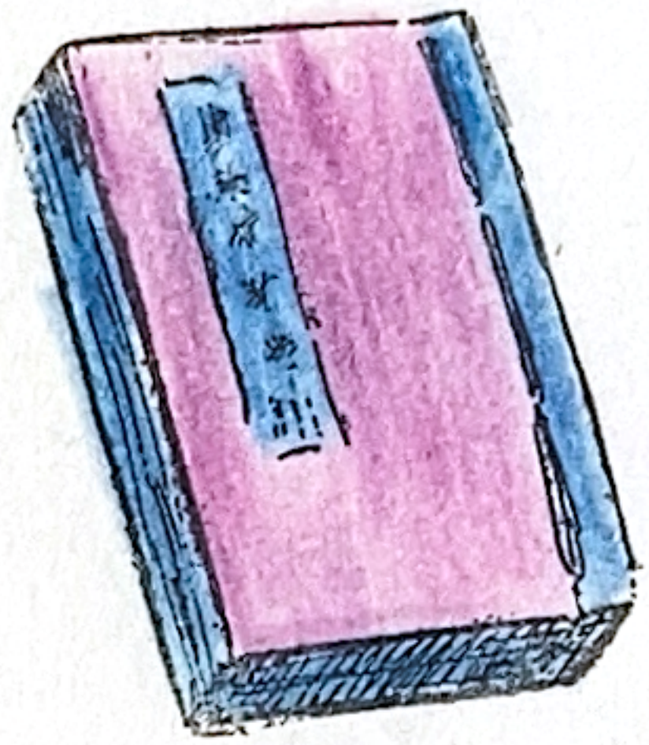
LITTLE PRECIOUS.

I.

Little Precious.

BIG Precious and Little Precious were the two daughters of Mr. Ling, who was Private Secretary to the chief Mandarin or Lord Mayor of the city. Mrs. Ling, the mother of the little girls, was often present when the missionary lady went to visit Lady Li, the Mandarin's wife, and give the Yamen ladies a Bible lesson. So Mrs. Ling soon learnt to know all about the Lord Jesus in her head, but she would not give her heart to Him. Both she and Mr. Ling gave up worshipping idols, even went to church several times, but they did not really pray to God.

However, they were very friendly with the missionary ladies, said that the "doctrine" they taught was "truly very good," and agreed to send their little girls to school. For two years Big Precious and Little Precious were at the



Christian Boarding School for Girls and learnt a great deal.

Big Precious was a clever child and she learnt to read the difficult Chinese characters without much trouble, and could soon read the whole Bible. Little Precious was much younger and not so clever. But she was a dear, gentle, good little thing, and all the girls and teachers loved her. She learnt all the Bible stories and could read St. Matthew's Gospel very nicely, and, best of all, she learnt to love the Lord Jesus.

Of all the hymns she learnt, her favourite was the one which begins,

"I belong to Jesus,
I am not my own."

In Chinese, of course, it sounds quite different, though the meaning is just the same. On Sunday evenings, when all the girls sang hymns with "Teaching Aunt" (the missionary) before bed-time, if it was "Little Precious'" turn to

choose a hymn, that was the one she always chose.

Perhaps you are thinking that if Little Precious could read one Gospel she ought to have been able to read the whole Bible. And she could have done so if she had been a little English girl with a Bible in English, and only had to learn the easy English alphabet and how to spell. But Chinese is quite different and far more difficult. There are no letters like ours, and no spelling—perhaps you would like that ! The characters, as they are usually called, though " ideographs " is their right name, are very queer looking. There are more than forty thousand of them. Each one has a different meaning, and there is nothing in the character to tell you how to pronounce it.

So now you understand that though Little Precious might know all the characters in St. Matthew's Gospel, yet in Genesis or Revelation or any other part of the Bible, there would be a

great many characters which she had never learnt.

When at home for the holidays, Big Precious and Little Precious often talked about school and what they learnt there. Big Precious had joined the Scripture Union and used to read aloud the portion for the day to her mother and Little Precious. At meal times they were always very particular to say grace. Just to tease his little girls and see what they would do, Mr. Ling would sometimes begin to eat his rice before they had asked a blessing. Then Big Precious would jump up and stop him, saying :

" Oh, Daddy, Daddy ! What are you doing ? Eating, and you have not yet prayed and given thanks to God."

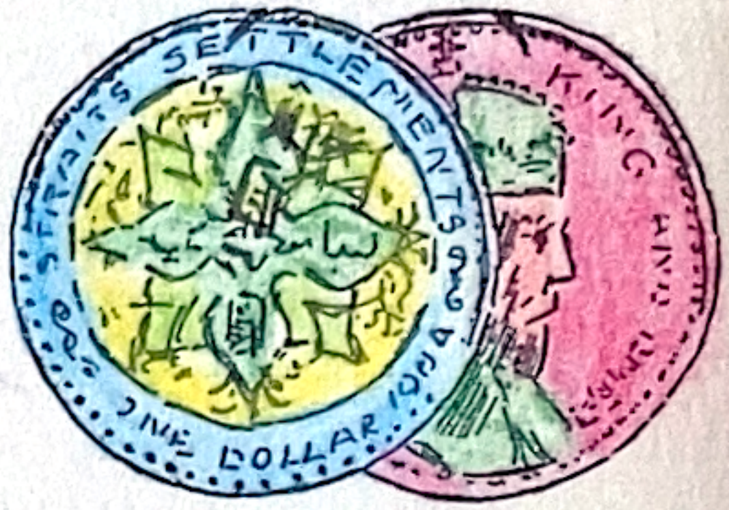
And she would make him put down his chop-sticks, bow his head, and close his eyes while she said grace.

One term, when school re-opened after the

summer holidays, Big Precious and Little Precious were not allowed to go. Mr. Ling, their father, expected to be away from home a good deal, and said the children must stay at home and keep their mother company. This is what Teaching Aunt was told, but she thought that there was probably another reason as well.

Mr. Ling's mother, the grandmother of Big Precious and Little Precious, lived two days' journey away, in the city of Foochow. She was an old lady and had been ill for a long time. Mr. Ling often had letters from her, and was very sorry to hear that his mother was not getting any better. Then one day a very angry and scolding letter came from the old lady.

She said she had been ill for many moons (that is what the Chinese say for months), she had called in all the cleverest Chinese doctors in Foochow and paid them a great deal of money ; she had taken all the nastiest and most evil-



smelling medicines, she had spent dollars and dollars of money sending presents to the idols, but instead of getting any better she was only getting worse, and it was all the fault of her son, Mr. Ling. She heard that he had left off worshipping idols and had sent his little girls, her grandchildren, to a Christian school; so, of course the spirits were angry and were punishing her and making her ill. If her son still loved her and wished to be a good son as he used to be, he must quickly, quickly, make some great offering and do some special worship which would please the idols, so that they would send away from her house the evil spirits which were making her ill.

Mr. Ling did not believe in the idols, but he could not bear to be told that he did not love his mother; so he determined to do something to please her.

In a few days there would be a great torch-

light procession for the idols. In these processions little children (generally boys), dressed up in most gorgeous and beautiful clothes, are sometimes carried, seated in a sort of little chair, the frame of which is placed on a man's shoulders, while the seat is high above his head. Mr. Ling had no little boy to ride in the procession, so he decided that Little Precious could go, as she was only eight years old and just about the right size.

When the day of the great idol procession came, Mr. Ling talked about it at breakfast time, and said that Little Precious was to ride in it.

"But, you know, Daddy, I belong to Jesus now, and I could not go in an idol procession," the little girl said ; but her father took no notice of her. She was only a child, and would, of course, do what was arranged for her.

Later in the morning, when Little Precious saw the beautiful clothes brought in and all the

preparations being made, she went to her father and told him that she could not and would not be carried in the procession, because she belonged to Jesus.

Mr. Ling laughed at her at first and told her about all the fine clothes she would wear, what fun the procession would be, and how she would be able to see everything from her high seat, perched up above a man's head. But Little Precious hardly listened to him.

"It is all for the idols," she said, "and all done to please them. I belong to Jesus, I am His little girl, and He would not like to see me dressed up to please the idols. I will not go. I must not go."

Then her father got angry and scolded her so severely that she began to cry; but between her sobs she kept crying and saying:

"Will not go, will not go——I belong to Jesus."

Mr. Ling did not know what to do, so he went to her mother; but he got no help from her. She only turned her back on him as she looked over a silk coat Little Precious was to wear and shrugged her shoulders, saying:

"I do not know. It is no affair of mine. You must follow your own ideas and do as you please."

This made Mr. Ling more angry still and more determined than ever that Little Precious must be carried in the procession that night. So he took her away and shut her up in a dark room by herself. There she stayed all day, sobbing and crying. Several times her father went to see her or spoke to her through the door; sometimes scolding and sometimes persuading her, but she only sobbed:

"Will not go, will not go. I belong to Jesus. I am Jesus' little girl."

At last it began to get dark. If little Precious was to go in the procession she would have to

be ready in an hour or so. She had not had any dinner, it was now supper time, and the child was nearly ill with crying. Mr. Ling went to her and once more tried to persuade her. As she still steadily refused to give in, he got very angry again, and said:

"Very well. You are going, and you must go in the procession to-night, and next time I come back I will beat you."

Little Precious had never been beaten in her life, so she was very brave about it, and said:

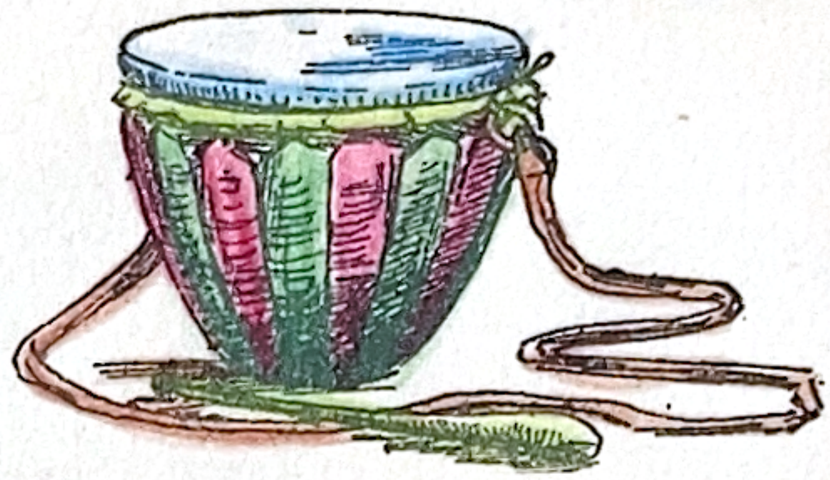
"Very well, Daddy. If you must beat me, you will have to beat me, but I cannot go in the idol procession because I belong to Jesus. I am His little girl."

But the next time, when her Daddy, who had always been so kind to her and loved her so much, came with a bamboo cane in his hand to beat her, the poor child could not bear any more,

and she said at once that she would obey him and do whatever he wished.

Then they got her ready. They painted up her little pale face and blackened her eyebrows and dressed her hair, putting on a beautiful head-dress. She had lovely earrings and bracelets and rings to wear, and the most gorgeous silk clothes you can imagine. But although they told her how pretty she was and how beautiful she looked, she just hated it all because it was for the idols. A strong kind man had been hired to carry her and was told to take great care of her. She was lifted up into the little seat above his head and away they went out into the dark to join in the great idol procession in the main street.

The procession pranced and walked round the city, stopping at every idol temple and shrine it came to, and making a terrible din with cymbals and gongs, castanets, and the firing off of Chinese



A Chinese Drum.

crackers. This lasted for three or four hours. But at the end of twenty minutes the man who was carrying Little Precious brought her home, saying that she was sobbing all the time and that it was no use to carry her any farther for she would be ill.

Mr. Ling had done all he could, so he told Mrs. Ling to take the poor worn-out child away and put her to bed.

One of the "Church Uncles," as the Chinese call the men Christians, was out in the streets that night, and saw Little Precious being carried in the great idol procession. So he told someone who would be sure to tell Teaching Aunt; for the Chinese like to do such things in a roundabout way.

When Teaching Aunt heard it she went at once with one of the school-teachers, who was very fond of Little Precious, to find out if it could be true, and was told the whole sad story by Mrs. Ling.

Other days when Teaching Aunt went to visit their mother, Big Precious and Little Precious used to run joyfully to meet her at the entrance to the house, shaking their own hands together and saying:

"Teaching Aunt, peace, peace!" Then they would take her by the hand and lead her in.

But this day no little girls ran out, and the house seemed very quiet. Teaching Aunt asked for the children, and Big Precious came when she was called and "invited peace" politely, but seemed afraid of the visitors, and not at all glad to see them. Little Precious was sent for again and again, but she refused to come. At last Teaching Aunt herself went to look for her, and found the child in a dark corner in the kitchen crying bitterly.

If she had been a little English child Teaching Aunt would have taken her into her arms and kissed her, but that would have shocked Little

"PEACE."

Precious and everybody in the house; for the Chinese think kissing a very queer and horrid custom. A mother will sometimes kiss her tiny baby in a clumsy way that shows she does not know how, but that is all the kissing that is done in China.

So Teaching Aunt drew the little quivering body close to her side and dried the big hot tears with her handkerchief. At last little Precious stopped sobbing and found her voice.

"Jesus can never forgive me," she said, beginning to cry again.

"Have you asked Him to?" asked Teaching Aunt.

"No," said Little Precious miserably. "I have not dared to pray since that night. The idols will count that I belong to them, and Jesus will count that I am not His."

"What are the idols, little sister?" Teaching Aunt asked.

"They are only carved wood or moulded clay," the answer came quickly.

"Well, can they think? Can they reckon?"

"Of course not," said Little Precious eagerly again.

"Then if they cannot reckon, how can they count that you belong to them?" asked Teaching Aunt once more.

"Certainly they cannot," and the little voice was getting quite cheerful.

Teaching Aunt wanted Little Precious to find it all out for herself; so she asked some more questions.

"Whom did the Lord Jesus die to save?"

"All under Heaven who believe on Him," said the little girl, answering out of a catechism she had learnt at school.

"You believe on Him; can you be counted in?" was the next question.

"Yes, I am an all-under-Heaven one person," she answered.

"Well, if Jesus died for you, does He love you, little sister?"

"Jesus very much loves me," Little Precious said very softly. It was a line from the chorus of the Chinese translation of the hymn, "Jesus loves me, this I know."

"Yes, He very much loves you," Teaching Aunt said. "So do you not think we can dare to ask Him to forgive you?"

Then they knelt down and told the Lord Jesus all about it, knowing that He was quite willing to forgive and did count Little Precious as one of His little ones.

When they rose from their knees Little Precious looked very happy. But there was one more trouble.

"I can never dare to go to church or school again and face the girls; for everybody knows that I went in that idol procession."

The kind teacher from the school then

comforted her, telling her the girls had been so sorry for her, and had said that they must pray for her.

So the next Sunday Little Precious came with Big Precious to church, and you will be glad to hear that both the little girls were allowed to go back to school the next term, though only as day-scholars and not as boarders.

II.

Resurrection Little Sister.

"TEACHING Aunt, peace ! Teaching Aunt, peace ! peace ! Little Sister has come ! Little Sister has come !"

Two little Chinese boys rushed out of the house to meet "Teaching Aunt" at the gate and tell her the great news. She had come to say good-bye to Gi-muk and Die* and their mother because she was going away for a holiday on a long journey to a high mountain where it would be cooler. Here in the city it was very, very hot ; so hot that Gi-muk and Die had both fallen asleep on a hard wooden bench in the coolest part of the house. And they were so sound asleep that they would never have heard Teaching Aunt coming, only that "Doggie" barked. They wakened up so suddenly that they forgot how hot it was and

RESURRECTION LITTLE SISTER.

*Pronounced "Dee-ay."

ran to meet their friend.

Gi-muk was seven. He was thin and small for his age, not very strong, and too often he had a bad cough or sore eyes. He had gentle quiet ways, and was a special friend of Teaching Aunts. Thoughtful black eyes looked shyly out of a thin little face, all his head was shaved except for a tiny patch of fringe on his forehead and a little patch of long hair at the back which was plaited into a pigtail neatly finished off with pink wool.

Now-a-days where Gi-muk lived you would not see a pigtail, but when he and the other people in these stories were little, it was the only proper way for Chinese men and boys to wear their hair.

Die was quite different, though he had black hair and black eyes too. He was only three, too young yet to have even a tiny pigtail, and had only a little tuft of fringe on the front. All the rest of his head was clean shaved. He was sturdy and strong, with a round face and round

black eyes and a little set mouth that looked as if he was quite ready to fight anyone who did not do as he wanted. A year before, when Teaching Aunt first knew Die, he had been a great trial to her, and that was how she first began to love him. When his mother came to prayer-meeting, Die was too small to be left at home, so he came too. When the other people knelt down to pray, Die stood beside his mother or sat down on the floor, and he was not always very quiet. In those days Teaching Aunt found it very hard to pray out loud in that strange Chinese language, and Die did not make it any easier, for when he heard Teaching Aunt's voice he would toddle round and look in her face to see if her eyes were shut tight, or perhaps it was to find out in his baby way why she said the words so funnily.

Gi-muk and Die loved each other very much ; but for a long time they had wanted a little sister. So every day when they said their prayers, they

asked God to send them one. As Gi-muk said in Chinese, they "asked straight ahead" until God sent her. So on this very hot day they were very glad indeed to see Teaching Aunt, and ran to tell her the great news. The night before, when they were fast asleep, little sister had come. Gi-muk was very pleased because he had been the first to see her.

His mother told Teaching Aunt how he had awakened at the third cock-crow. Baby was crying, and Gi-muk called out and asked his mother if that was *their* baby crying, and had God sent the little sister? His mother said "Yes." Gimuk was afraid he was only dreaming, so he tumbled off the bed and went to see for himself. You can imagine how glad he was when he saw that there really was a dear little baby sister lying in his mother's arms. He just said: "Truly great thanks to God," and tumbled back to bed and to sleep beside Die. In the morning, when

BABY'S SHOES.

Die heard a little sister had come, he brought his best shoes and wanted her to go out and play with him. Gi-muk was a little jealous because Teaching Aunt took little sister in her arms and he had not been allowed to hold her yet. Die with his big round eyes was standing by, watching Teaching Aunt and the precious baby. Presently he said in a quiet little voice :

" Teaching Aunt very much loves big brother and me. Teaching Aunt very much loves little sister. Jesus very much loves big brother and me, Jesus very much loves little sister."

So Gi-muk forgot to be jealous.

" Together, together we are glad," he said.

Before Teaching Aunt left they all knelt together and thanked God for sending Little Sister, and asked that she might grow up strong and healthy, and love and serve Jesus all her life and bring many to Him.

Teaching Aunt went away feeling very happy

to think of a little Chinese baby girl in a Christian home, where she would be loved and well cared for and hear of the Good Shepherd and how He loves little children.

It was so different to what might have happened if "Little Sister" had come to a heathen home. And they were nearly all heathen homes in the city where Gi-muk and Die lived. There are hundreds of houses there where the fathers and mothers do not know the true God, but worship idols and teach the children to do the same. In such homes when a little girl baby is born everybody wishes she was a boy; nobody wants her, not even her own mother, and she may be left to die of neglect, or even be strangled or drowned. Nobody would pity her or even know that it was wicked to do such things, for they know nothing of the God of love, the Heavenly Father.

But Gi-muk, Die, and Little Sister had a happy home, for their father and mother loved

and served the Lord Jesus. Years before, they had heard of Him from the missionaries, and now they knew Him as their Saviour, and God as their Father.

Teaching Aunt was away for two months, and when she came back Gi-muk's mother had a very sad story to tell about the little baby sister. But it was not too bad a story, for it had a happy ending.

Little new babies are always very tiny and weak, but Little Sister was very, very tiny and very, very weak. And when she was only a fortnight old she got so weak and ill that she could not swallow any food at all. The missionary lady doctor was away and nothing the Chinese doctor could do for the poor baby made her any better. Some Chinese doctors have a few good medicines, but they do not always know how to use them. Most of their medicines are very queer, such as tigers' hairs and gunpowder, and they

have medicines called dragon's teeth and dragon's eyes ; but I do not know what they are made of, as I never heard of anyone who ever saw a dragon, though we often hear of him in China, and all the children and people who do not know any better are very frightened of him. When there is an earthquake they say it is the dragon that lives in the centre of the earth shaking himself. When there is an eclipse of the sun or moon they say that the dragon is swallowing the sun or the moon, and the people gather together and make as much noise as they can, shouting, beating gongs and drums, clanging cymbals and firing off guns to try and frighten the dragon and keep him from gulping down all the sun or the moon.

Gi-muk and Die were very sad because the poor Little Sister got smaller and weaker every day and the Chinese doctor's medicines did not make her any better. At last one Sunday morning the baby was so much worse that the mother

and father were quite sure that the Father in Heaven was going to take her home to the Happy Land. But before they parted with their little darling they thought they would like to have her baptized, received into Christ's Church here on earth. They lived quite close to the church, and many of the Christian Chinese men and women had come early to Morning Service to see how the baby was, and sympathize with the father and mother. One of them ran off quickly to ask the clergyman to come at once.

The rest all knelt down and prayed to the Lord Jesus, the Great Physician, to make the baby well if it was His will, and to comfort the father and mother.

The Pastor (that is what a Chinese clergyman is called) soon came, and all the Christians went together into the church. Many of them were crying because they were so sorry for the father and mother. It was a very hot day in the hottest

time of the year, and everybody in that church was very hot indeed, except Little Sister. There was so little life in the tiny body that they could not keep her warm, and she was getting colder and colder. She had not moved for hours, and now she lay quite still in her father's strong arms, while the Pastor read the first part of the baptismal service, and prayed for her. But when the Pastor took her very gently into his arms, she opened her eyes as he sprinkled the water on her and made the sign of the cross on her tiny forehead. Then the father took her again into his arms, and he found, to his great joy, that she was beginning to get warmer instead of colder, and that she was really better !

From that time Little Sister got better every hour till in a few days she was quite well. You can think how happy father and mother, Gi-muk and Die all were, and their friends too, and how they thanked God for letting the baby stay with

them. They called her "Resurrection Little Sister" because they said she was almost dead and the Lord Jesus brought her to life again.

This was the story Teaching Aunt heard when she came back from the mountains. "Resurrection Sister" was such a fat, happy baby then that you would never have thought that she could have been so ill. And Gi-muk was very pleased to show Teaching Aunt how well he could hold the baby, even though she was so much bigger and heavier than the first day she had seen her.

Perhaps sometimes when you say your prayers and ask God to bless Father and Mother and make you a good girl, or boy, you will think of Resurrection Little Sister, Gi-muk, and Die, and ask God to bless all the hundreds and thousands of children in China that they may come to know of Jesus and His love.

SIE-PENG.

III.

Sie - Peng.*

THE weekly prayer-meeting for women was over; most of the women who had come to it were on their way home to cook supper, and the missionary ladies had just settled down to a rather late afternoon tea.

Then the cook, a Chinaman, came in with a message.

"In South Street there is an old man very ill, and his family have sent to invite the Little Search Teaching Aunt to go and see him."

Two of the Teaching Aunts were sisters, so of course had the same surname "Search," but the elder was called "the Great Search," and the younger was known as "the Little Search" Teaching Aunt.

*Pronounced See-a-Paing.

"It must be a mistake," said the Little Search Teaching Aunt, speaking in Chinese so that the cook could understand, and beginning to eat bread and butter very fast in case there was no mistake, and she might have to hurry with her tea and go out.

"If the man is ill, they of course wish to invite the Doctor Teaching Aunt."

"No," said the cook, "though the man is very old and very ill, they do not want the doctor, but they invite 'the Little Search' Teaching Aunt to go and pray for him and speak the Book."

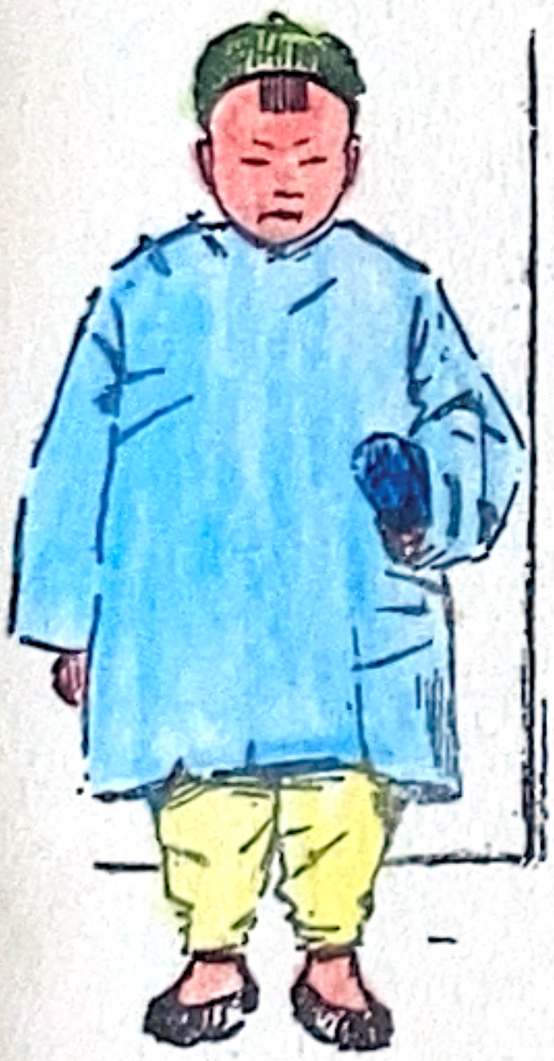
But "the Little Search" Teaching Aunt still thought there must be some mistake; for she had not been many months in the city, so she was not well known. Besides, she had not been long in China, and could not speak the language well.

"There must be some mistake," she said again. "They perhaps mean my eldest sister. It may be someone she has visited."

But the cook said he was quite sure he had taken the message correctly.

"Who has come with the invitation?" asked she. "Invite the person to come in and speak to me."

"It is a little boy," said the cook, and disappeared.



Presently a noise of shuffling feet was heard outside, the door opened, and in walked a little boy. He wore a long blue cotton coat, and a pair of gorgeous yellow silk trousers which reached to his ankles and were fastened there with black bands. On his head was a round black cap with a bright red knot on the top. A neat fringe of hair partly showed in front beneath the cap, and down his back hung a long, black, neatly-plaited pigtail, finished and tied at the ends with a plait of pink cord.

The Little Search Teaching Aunt saw at once that he was a friend of hers. He was called

Sie-peng; but like many Chinese children he lisped, so he always gave his name as "Thie-peng." He went to the missionary day school in the city taught by a Christian teacher. The day school was really for girls, but little boys were allowed to go till they were ten or eleven years old. Teaching Aunt often visited the day school and had sometimes heard the children say their lessons; lately she had taught the class in Sunday school to which Sie-peng belonged.

Sie-peng was a very polite little boy and knew what a properly mannered Chinese boy ought to do. As soon as he came into the room he walked straight over to where Teaching Aunt was sitting, and, before she could stop him, knelt down, put his hands palms downwards on the floor in front of him and knocked his forehead on the ground between them. She soon made him get up, and then he shook his own hands together and said "How do you do?" in the Christian way:

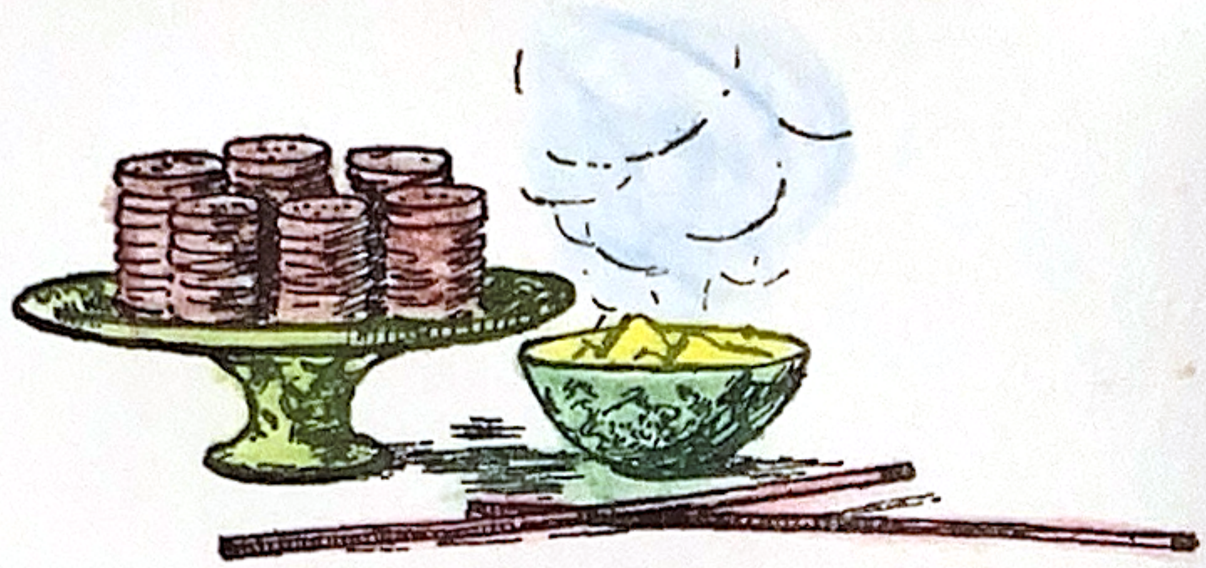
"Teaching Aunt, peace!"

Then he gave his message.

"My grandfather is very ill, and he is a very old person. He has been ill a long time. I have taught him all I could of what I learnt at school, but I do not know how to teach him any more. I now invite Teaching Aunt to quickly come and speak the Book and teach him how to pray to God."

"Speak the Book" means to read and teach out of the Bible.

As Mrs. Dang, the Day School teacher, was a friend of Sie-peng's and knew the family a little, Teaching Aunt sent a message to her to ask her to get ready at once and go with them to the house in South Street. Mrs. Dang had only just got back to her home from the prayer-meeting, and had taken off her best shoes and Sunday coat, and pulled out her best earrings. And to Sie-peng, who was waiting for her, it seemed to



take a very long time to put them all on again. Then before she went out she had to give her little daughter a great many directions about cooking the supper. But at last she was ready, and five minutes' walk brought them to Sie-peng's house.

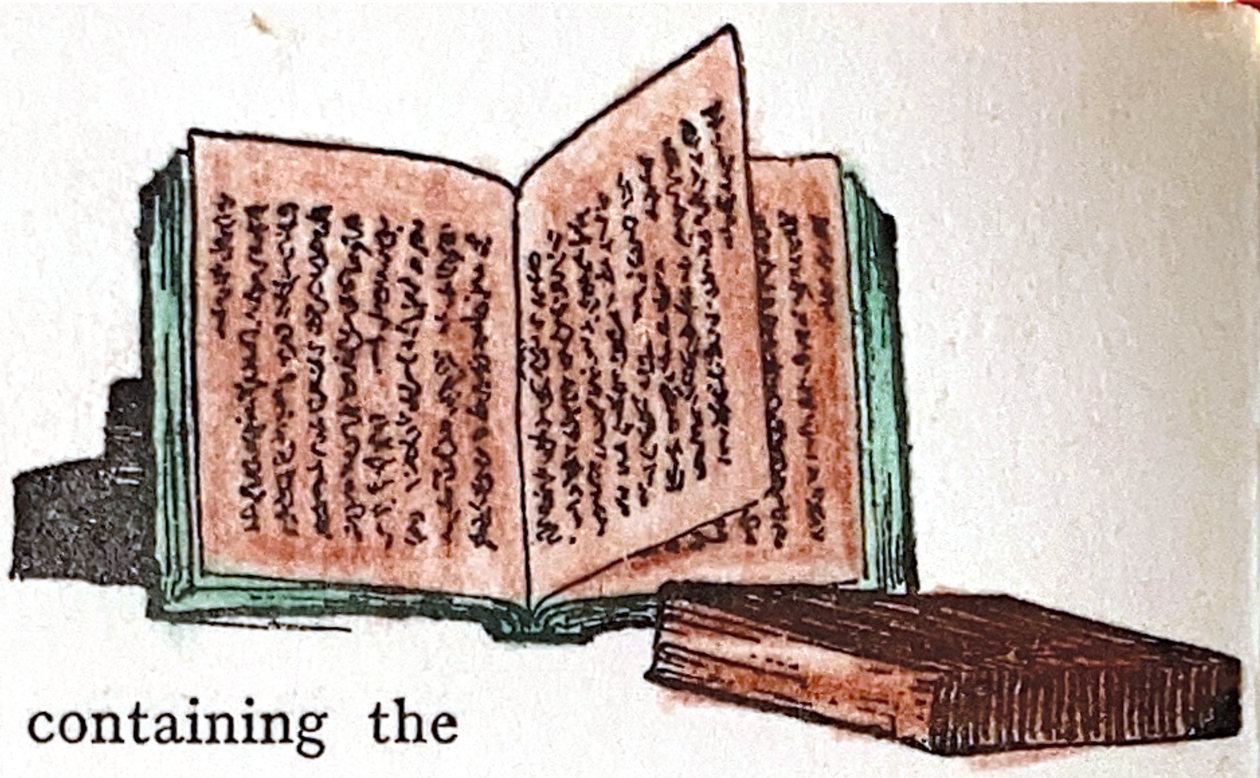
The grandmother came to the door to greet them, and led them into a room where a table was spread with plates piled up with little cakes. One of the daughters-in-law, an aunt of Sie-peng's, brought tea, and Teaching Aunt and Mrs. Dang were pressed to eat. Then bowls of delicious little dumplings, piping hot and swimming in hot spiced gravy, were brought. They were so good that Teaching Aunt would like to have eaten all that were in her bowl, but that would have been very bad manners ; so she did her best to be very polite, and with her chop-sticks picked out three or four of the smallest dumplings and ate them, leaving all the rest. And all the time

she was eating the grandmother kept pressing her to eat, and saying :

"The Teaching Aunt is eating nothing ! Teaching Aunt, I invite you to eat. Teaching Aunt is not eating at all. Truly I have nothing in the house fit to set before her and the teacher. Teaching Aunt, I invite you to eat. Mrs. Dang, I invite you to eat. While it is hot, quickly take with the chop-sticks and eat."

For this is Chinese manners.

When Teaching Aunt and Mrs. Dang had laid down their chop-sticks and sipped as much tea as they were expected to, they talked to the women of the house for a while and then were led into the room where the old man lay in bed. Though very weak and ill, he was quite able to talk, and he told how Sie-peng taught him all he learnt at the Day School every day when he came home. The old man had read all the Christian books that Sie-peng brought from school. The Hundred



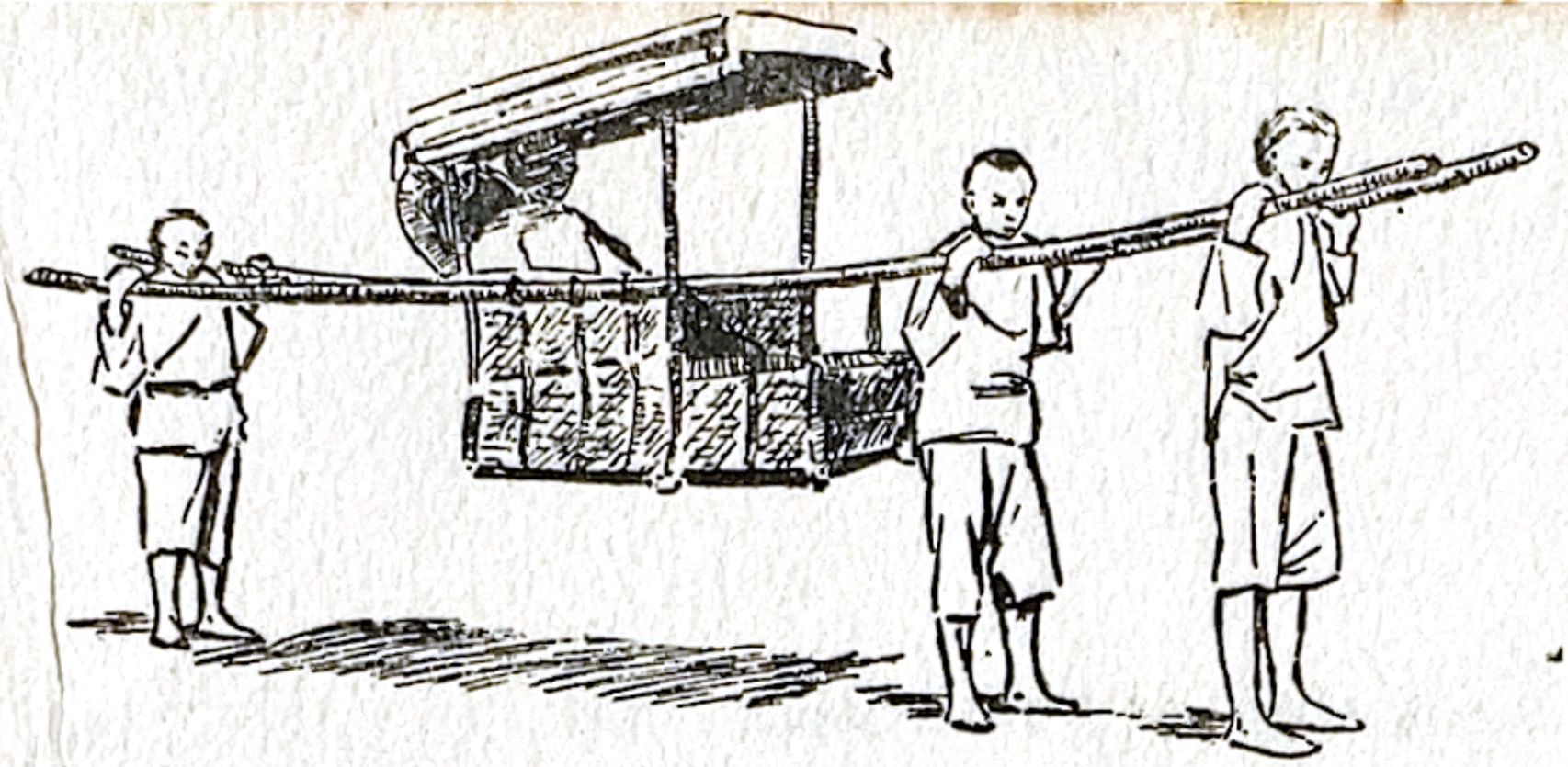
texts in Chinese, a little book containing the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and twelve hymns, an easy catechism about the "Jesus doctrine," and the Five Character classic, a rhyme in Chinese explaining the Ten Commandments. He had read all these, but there was a great deal in them that he did not understand. Teaching Aunt and Mrs. Dang explained all he asked about them, and talked to him long and earnestly. While one talked to the sick man the other talked to the women, telling them about the Father in Heaven Who loves them and all mankind, and how He showed His great love by sending His Son Jesus Christ to die for them. Before leaving they all knelt down together; these women who had never before knelt in prayer to God, Mrs. Dang who had once bowed down to idols but now loved to pray to God and to work for Him, and Teaching Aunt the "foreign child" from the far Western

Kingdom who was there as His messenger; and Teaching Aunt and Mrs. Dang asked God to bless the whole family and teach them to know Him.

Sie-peng had gone out to play as soon as he had satisfied his curiosity as to how Teaching Aunt could manage chop-sticks; and when she and Mrs. Dang were once more in the street he came running up and saw them safely home.

The old grandfather got quite well, and every Sunday he and Sie-peng went to church together. But I do not know whether he has ever yet given his whole heart to Jesus Christ, for his hands are very full of business for the idols. He and all his brothers, sons, and grandsons make their living by beating out pewter into thin sheets of paper to be sold and made into paper money for burning before the idols

and the ancestors' spirits, and of course they cannot do that and serve the living and true God. So pray for all the children who go to Christian schools in China that they may not forget what they learn, but may grow up to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and may lead many of their friends and relations to Him.



IV.

How a Baby Helped to Preach to the Heathen.

TEACHING AUNT was staying with the Biblewoman at a village up in the mountains, a day's journey from the city. Every-day that was fine they were carried in sedan chairs to some other village at a distance, and spent the day there visiting the Chinese women and telling them about the true God. In many of these villages there were Christians. Some of the people had heard and believed, and a few of the women had been to the school in the city.

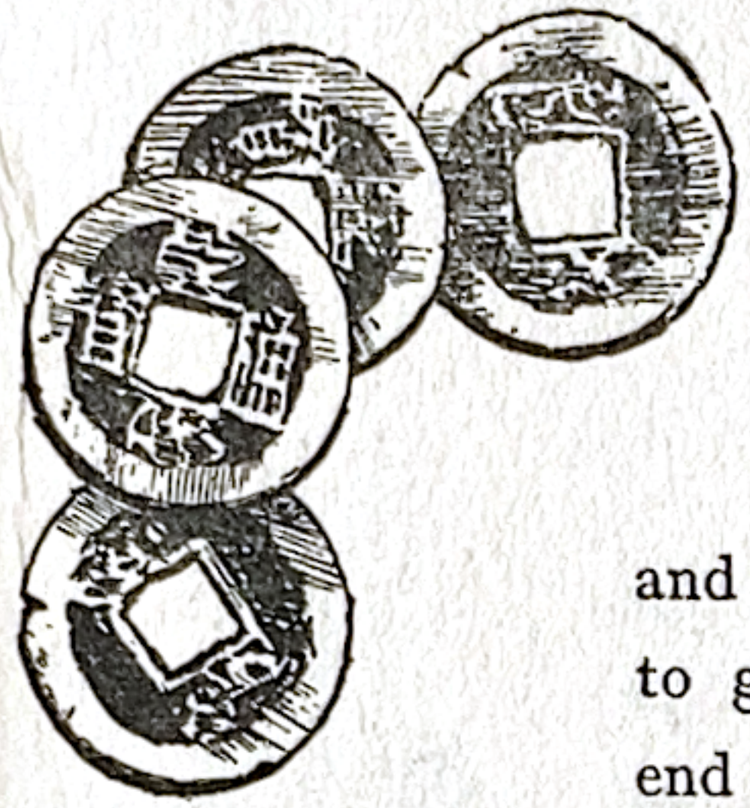
But one day Teaching Aunt and Mrs. Wong, the Biblewoman, went to a village where the people were all heathen. Every one of them—men, women, and children—worshipped idols and the spirits of their ancestors, and were very much

afraid of evil spirits. And in thousands and thousands of villages to-day in China there are no Christians, for there are not nearly enough missionaries or Chinese preachers and Bible-women to go and carry to them the Good News. Teaching Aunt's sister, the Great Search, had been to this village before, and the people had listened to her and forgotten, and for two years no one had been able to visit there.

Teaching Aunt's chair was put down by the side of a stream just outside the village, and she got out and waited for the Biblewoman, wondering why she was so far behind. At last her chair came in sight, looking like a tiny house carried on two poles stuck in loops on each side. The chair coolies came along very slowly, calling out :

"Ai ya ! Ai ya ! very wretched, very wretched !"

Teaching Aunt took no notice of their cries, because chair coolies so often grumble and groan

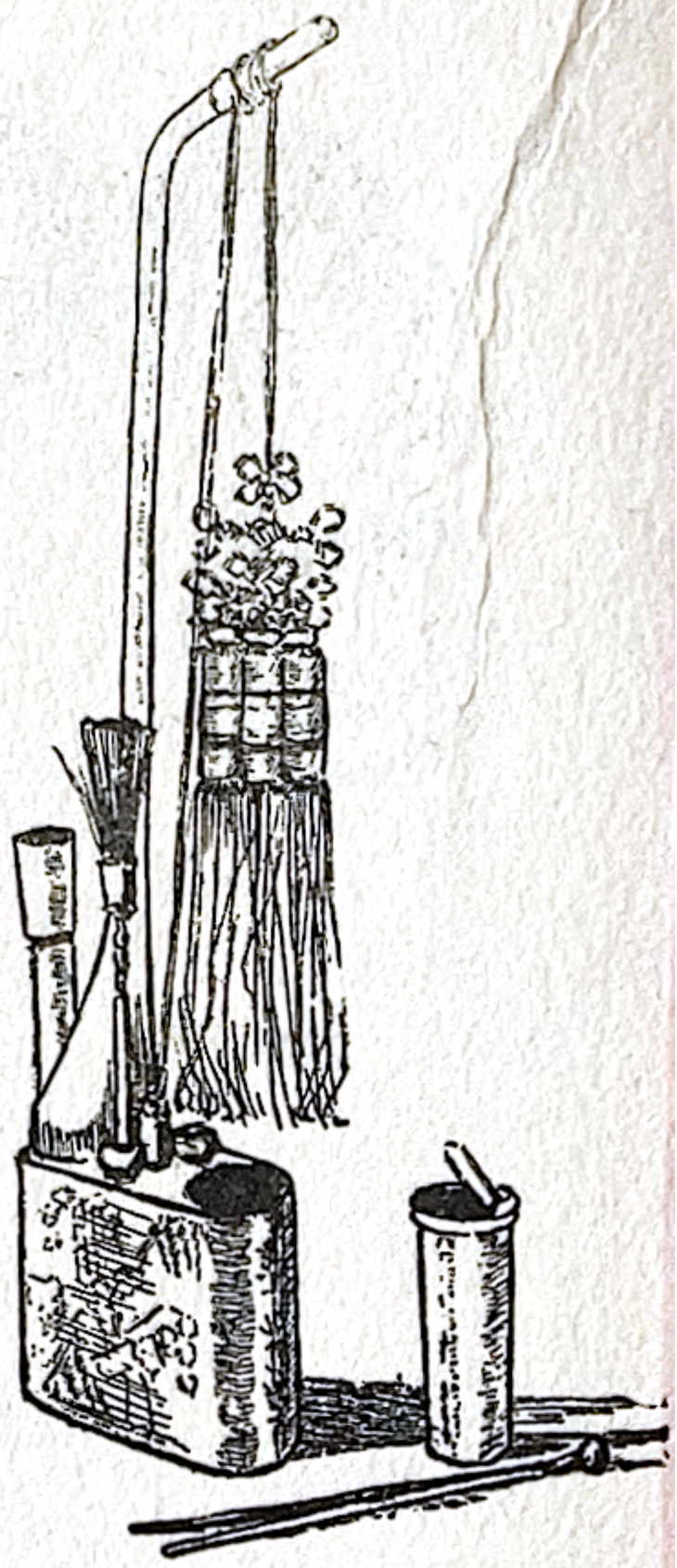


and make a great fuss, all as an excuse for trying to get more money than they should at the end of the journey. But as they came nearer she heard them say that it was Mrs. Wong who was so very wretched, and they called to her to quickly, quickly come. Teaching Aunt found the poor lady looking very miserable indeed, for an attack of ague had come on, and she was very sick and shaking all over. The arrival of the chair with a foreign lady had attracted a crowd from the little village, and poor Mrs. Wong, leaning on Teaching Aunt, was led to a friendly woman's house.

When she had been made as comfortable as possible on the woman's bed, and had drunk an awful dose of some hot medicine made from a water plant which the Chinese think very good for ague, Teaching Aunt left her for a while that she might go and talk to the people. They were all watching for her, but seemed afraid to come

to the house where Mrs. Wong was ill. The kind woman's daughter-in-law led her to a house quite near, and a great number of women and girls crowded round to look at Teaching Aunt, for they thought her very queer and funny looking. Just as queer-looking as you would think a Chinese lady if one came to pay you a visit.

They invited her to sit on the best seat, but she politely refused, offered it to a very old woman, and sat on a stool herself. They handed her a pipe and invited her to smoke while the kettle was boiling to make fresh tea for her, and were very much surprised to hear that she never smoked. She talked to them and asked them all the questions that are polite in China when you begin a conversation, and they asked her questions too. How many brothers she had, any sisters, and how many? How much did her dress cost? What was it made of, and were the white spots on it all pearls? Did she make it



herself, or did she hire a tailor to make it ? Why did she wear a hat, and what was it for ? Were her parents living, and how old were they, and why had she left them and come away to the Middle Kingdom from the Western Kingdom ?

Then Teaching Aunt began to tell her message. The women listened at first, but were not interested and they soon began to go away. All the time Teaching Aunt was talking she was praying in her heart and asking God to give her the right words to speak and that His Holy Spirit would make the women hear and understand. And as she saw the women going away, she prayed more and more earnestly, asking that they might come to the Saviour of Whose love she was telling them.

At a little distance just in front of Teaching Aunt sat a young woman with a darling little baby on her knee. Many Chinese children who are old enough to run about are terrified of the missionary ladies and run away screaming if they

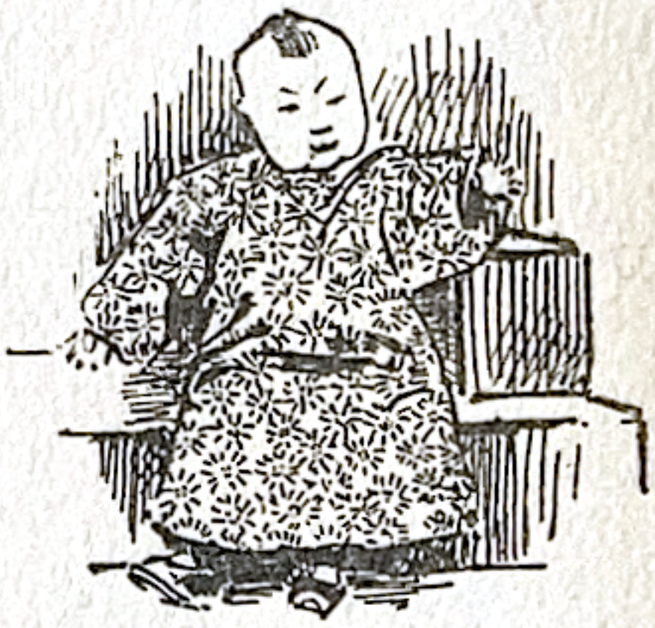
see one coming down the street. This is because their mothers frighten them when they are naughty by telling them that if they are not good the "foreign child" or the "foreign demon," or "foreign old woman," as they call the missionary lady, will come and catch them. But tiny babies are not old enough to be frightened in that way. They are perfectly sweet, and look such quaint little dears. When they are a month old their heads are shaved, and no hair is allowed to grow for the first year or two. They wear funny little red hoods, with flowers embroidered on them in bright silks. They are bound up so firmly in their little coarse blue cotton garments that you are never afraid that a Chinese baby will break or bend in the middle when you hold it in your arms.

This baby was about eight or nine months old, and he sat straight up on his mother's knee and watched Teaching Aunt curiously out of his

big black eyes. She smiled at him ; but at first he took no notice of her forwardness. Then before long he smiled back and held out his arms to go to her. But now it was Teaching Aunt's turn to take no notice of him, for the mother did not look pleased and tried to turn the baby away. So, though Teaching Aunt longed to take him, she was afraid that the mother might not like it ; and if the child should be in the least ill, even weeks afterwards, she and the neighbours might think it was Teaching Aunt's evil influence.

Presently she forgot about the baby and talked on earnestly, praying in her heart all the time ; but the group of women grew less and less and no one seemed to care to listen.

As she talked the baby watched her, and she saw him bend his body, move his lips quickly, and nod his head forward in an odd way. At last it struck Teaching Aunt that the baby was copying her, and it was so funny that she burst



out laughing in the very middle of a sentence.

This gave all the women a great surprise, and those who were going away turned back to see what was the matter, calling to others in the back of the house to come and see ; so that the crowd was soon even larger than it had been at first.

" Just look at that baby ! " said Teaching Aunt, as soon as she could stop laughing. " Truly he is very intelligent. I never knew before that when I am speaking words I nod my head, and there sits that baby watching me and copying me. It is very amusing. Now watch him while I again speak words."

But baby, of course, stopped his funny antics when everybody looked at him, and Teaching Aunt had to tell them to pretend not to take any notice of him. After a while he began again nodding his head and moving his lips. She made a sign for them all to look, and everybody shouted with laughter.

" Very like ! Truly very like ! " they said, and laughed again. Baby, finding he had done something very clever, laughed and chuckled too, and reached out his tiny arms again to Teaching Aunt. He was too charming to be resisted any longer, and soon he was in her arms, grabbing at her cheeks and hair with fat dimpled hands that were not too clean.

After this everything was different. Perhaps the women saw that the queer-looking " foreign child " was a woman like themselves. Anyhow, the baby was not a bit afraid of her, though he had never seen anyone like her before in his short life.

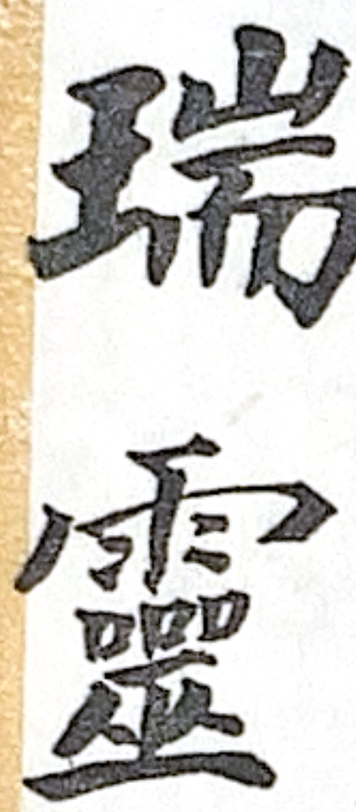
While she spoke to them with the baby on her knee, they gathered round her and listened to the wonderful message she had come to bring; and when she went on to another house, they stood at the door and called, till she was out of sight, the Chinese good-bye:

"Slowly, slowly walk! To-morrow come again! Slowly, slowly walk! Quickly, quickly came again! Quickly, quickly come again! Slowly, slowly walk!"

And Teaching Aunt answered back:

"Don't trouble (to come out), Don't trouble. Enter and sit! I invite you to enter and sit. Many thanks for tea. Many thanks for tea. Enter and sit!"

Teaching Aunt was glad to find later on in the afternoon that Mrs. Wong had got over the attack of ague and was well enough to sit in the sedan chair and be carried home again.



FELICITOUS INTELLIGENCE.

V.

Felicitous Intelligence.

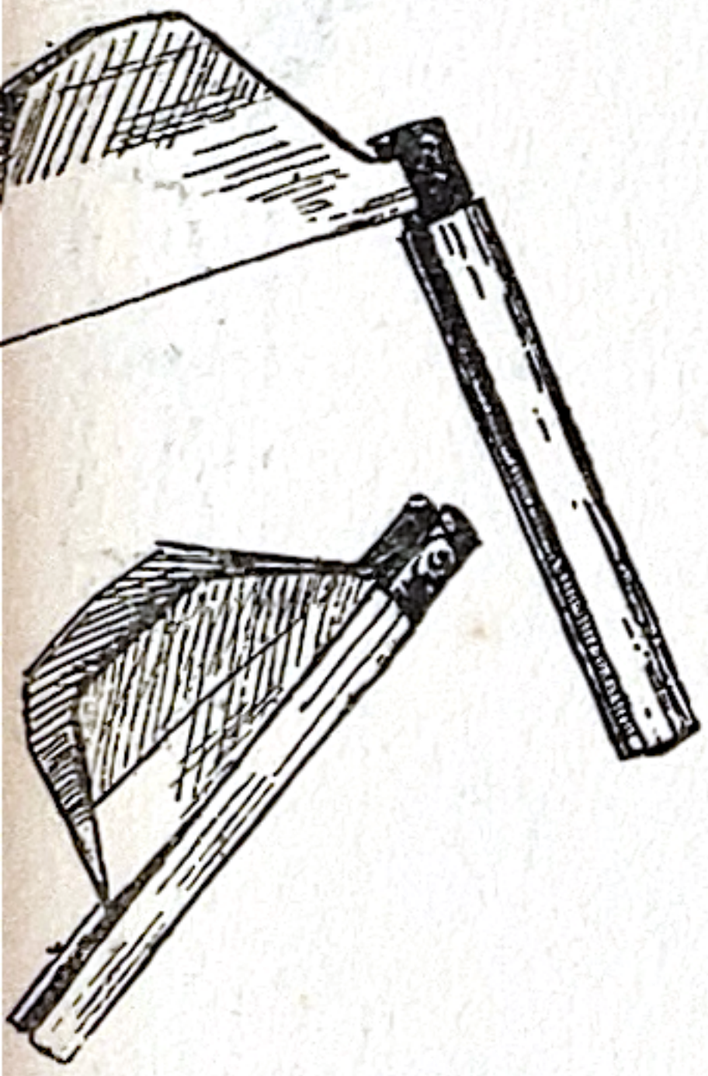
THOSE two long words make up the name of one little Chinese boy. In English it is a long name but in Chinese it is very much shorter. Felicitous Intelligence was his right name, and that was what was written in his Bible and what he wrote on the edges of the leaves of his lesson books; but his family and everybody that knew him called him "Little Brother," and forgot that he was Felicitous Intelligence. His big brother was Felicitous Manifestation, and his two sisters were Felicitous Purity and Felicitous Benevolence. So if there is anything in having a nice name, do you not think that they should have been a very happy Chinese family? For "felicitous" is a grown-up way of saying "very happy," as you will find out if you look in a dictionary or ask a grown-up person.

Felicitous Intelligence looked just as Chinese as his name sounds. He had a beautiful long black queue (or pigtail, I expect you would call it), with pink cord plaited in and tied at the end. A little hair on the front of his head was allowed to grow in a fringe and was so well oiled and carefully arranged over his forehead that you could have counted the hairs on it quite easily. On Saturdays, when his sister, Felicitous Benevolence, kindly shaved the sides and front of his head and made him tidy for Sunday, she carefully shaved his eyebrows too, till they were just neat curved lines above his black, almond-shaped eyes. He usually had nice rosy cheeks, so that one hardly noticed that he had a yellow face. He was dressed in a long blue cotton frock fastened down the side and reaching nearly to his ankles, and he had a wonderful pair of purple silk trousers tied over his white calico socks at the ankles with black ribbon. But these

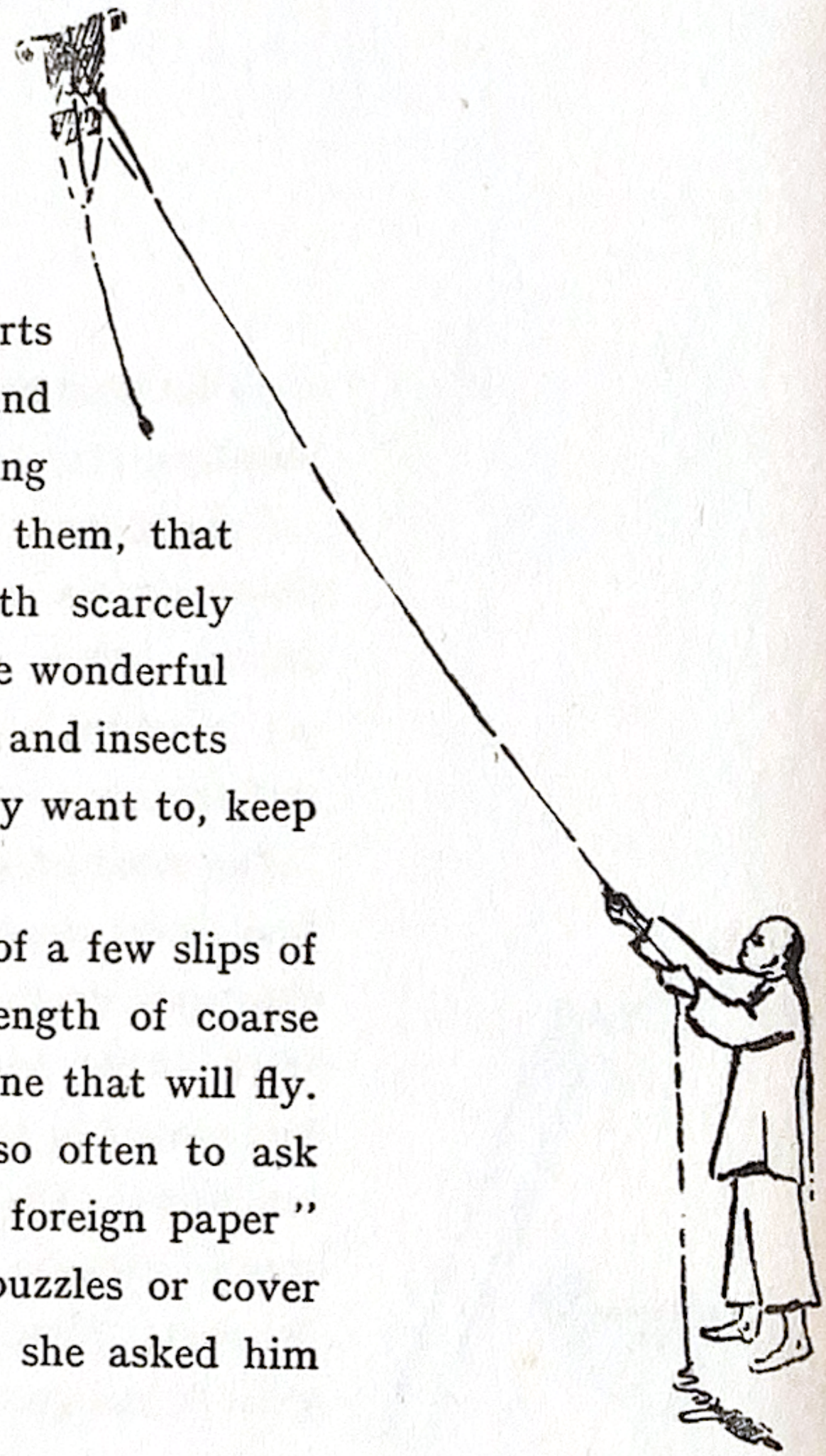
were his best trousers, and kept for wearing on Sundays. He had a blue cotton pair for every-day.

But though Felicitous Intelligence was as Chinese as he could be in name and looks, quite different from any English boy you ever saw, yet in many ways he was very like his British brothers, as you will hear.

The time of year that Felicitous Intelligence liked best was about November, when the nights are cool, the days are bright, and a fresh breeze blows, and all the men and boys fly kites. You never saw such beautiful kites as the Chinese can make. The frames are very light bamboo, over which light thin Chinese paper is stuck with rice paste. They can make lions and tigers which, when in the air, can be made to wag their jaws and move their legs and tails. A huge eagle or hawk is a favourite shape, and the owner of such a kite will make it soar and swoop like a live bird. Dragon-flies and huge prawns are also



Chinese Razors.



common, and there are all sorts of other varieties of kites. And the Chinese are so clever at flying the kites as well as at making them, that without having to run, and with scarcely any exertion, they can send these wonderful paper and bamboo beasts, birds, and insects high up into the sky, and, if they want to, keep them there all day.

Every boy who can get hold of a few slips of bamboo, some paper, and a length of coarse cotton thread, has a kite, and one that will fly.

Felicitous Intelligence came so often to ask Teaching Aunt for a piece of "foreign paper" (that is, newspaper) to make puzzles or cover his school books, that one day she asked him what he used it all for.

"Is it to make kites?" she asked.

"No," he replied, with great scorn for Teaching Aunt's ignorance; "who could make a kite with such thick paper?"

"Western Kingdom boys can," said Teaching Aunt.

"They might make the kites with it, but who could fly them?" came the scornful question again.

"Western Kingdom boys can both make them and fly them," said Teaching Aunt, and told how her brothers often made them and what fun they had flying them. But she did not say how far they had to run across wide fields, nor what trouble they had with tails and cord before the kite would go up.

Chinese boys also play with balls and shuttle-cocks. Nearly any boy can make a ball that will bounce fairly well out of some cotton thread wound tightly round a hard centre. This they bounce on some hard flat ground, beating it down with the palm of the hand and counting how many times they can beat it without letting it drop and roll away. When they get up to

ten they turn round once, at twenty round twice, at thirty three times, and all without letting the ball stop bouncing. I have often seen boys count up to ninety at this game. Three or four boys play happily together with one ball, taking turns in bouncing it, while the others sit round watching and counting. To find out who shall have the ball first, intead of counting or saying

"Ena, mena, mina, mo,
Catch a [redacted]igger by the toe,"

or some such rhyme, they play a game called "guessing the fist." Two boys at a time slap their right hands together and then quickly show up either the thumb, little finger, or first finger with the rest of the fist closed. Whoever has put up the "greatest" finger has won and gets the ball. In this game the little finger counts as greater than the thumb, the thumb is greater than the first finger, and the first finger

is greater than the little finger. It sounds very muddling but if you try the game you will see that it is quite simple. Suppose you and I could slap our right hands together, and you were to put up your little finger while I put up my thumb, then you would have won, because the little finger is greater than the thumb. But if I had put up my first finger, I would have won, because the first finger counts as greater than the little finger.

The shuttlecocks are home-made too. Some stiff feathers of the right size and shape are tied cleverly to one or two cash for the base. A cash is a thin brass coin with a square hole in the centre. Eight or ten of these would be worth as much as a farthing. The boys do not use bats for playing with a shuttlecock, but kick it high into the air with the inner side of the heel in a wonderful way.

SHUTTLECOCK.

At the beginning of the chapter, I mentioned that Felicitous Intelligence had a Bible and what

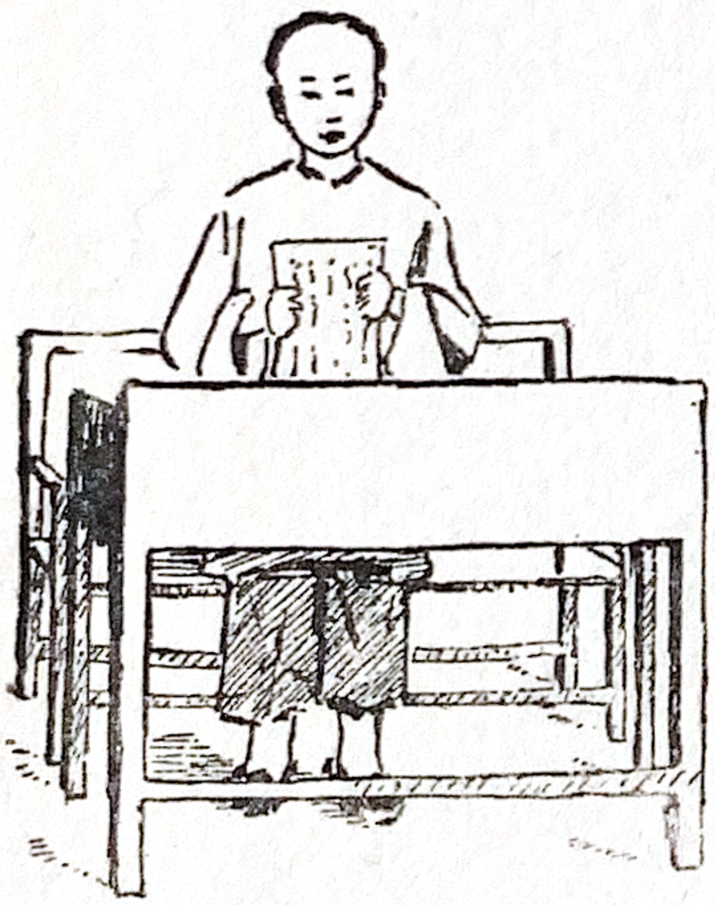
he wore on Sundays ; so you understand that he was a little Christian boy.

A heathen boy has a holiday from school every seventh day, but that is all he knows about Sunday. Only a few years ago he had not even a holiday on Sunday, but only on special feast days and for a month at the Chinese New Year.

The little heathen boys in China who worship their ancestors and the idols do not know the true God, nor that He has appointed a day of rest for all his creatures. The Chinese months are not divided into weeks and there are no names for the days. They are called by the date of the month, as the 5th day, or the 15th, or 22nd. But the Christian Chinese call Sunday " Worship Day." Monday is " Worship One," Tuesday " Worship Two,' 'and so on to Saturday, which is " Worship Six."

Felicitous Intelligence lived at a Mission Boarding School for girls where his mother was

matron. Once a week the school-girls had a meeting. One or two spoke on some subject that had been chosen, and others read texts or passages of Scripture which they had found about the subject ; and sometimes they gave a few words of explanation as well. At one of these meetings Teaching Aunt could see from where she sat that Felicitous Intelligence had before him his slate covered with writing. He seemed very nervous and uneasy, and while one after another stood up and read out texts or spoke, he kept jumping up and sitting down again. At last Teaching Aunt said to the leader of the meeting :



"Felicitous Intelligence has perhaps something to read to us."

On hearing his name he stood up, looked very frightened, and sat down again. The leader smiled at him encouragingly, so he stood up again with his Bible in his hand and read out some verses in Proverbs that he had found out

all by himself. Then he took up his slate and read what he had written about the verses; after which he sat down with bright red cheeks looking very happy and as if he deserved his grand name. Teaching Aunt felt very pleased and happy too, to find that a little boy of nine would take so much trouble in reading his Bible. Many of the others in the meeting who were much older than Felicitous Intelligence were very much ashamed of themselves because they had been too lazy to find out any verses at all.

But though Felicitous Intelligence could be very good when he liked, he could also be very naughty and often gave his mother a great deal of trouble and worry.

It was very dull at times to have only girls to play with when school was over for the day, and Felicitous Intelligence often wished for some boys of his own age for companions. Of course he was not allowed to play with the little boys in

the street for fear he should learn wicked heathen things from them. His mother made a very strict rule that he was never to go outside the mission premises without her leave. And this he knew very well, for every time he disobeyed he got a severe beating when he came back and was sent to bed without any supper.

One very hot day in the summer Felicitous Intelligence found it particularly dull in the School garden. It was holiday time and all the girls were away. His mother and Felicitous Benevolence were the only people in the house and they were busy in the back yard washing clothes. They had begun to wash directly after their very early breakfast of soft rice and dried salt fish, and Felicitous Intelligence knew they would go on till it was time to cook the rice for twelve o'clock dinner. So there was no hope of getting any fun out of Felicitous Benevolence. It was a very hot morning, and as Felicitous

Intelligence lay on his back on a narrow bench with one leg bent to hold up the other leg which was lazily kicking the air, and watched his sister perspiring over the wash-tub, he was glad that he was not a girl, and that he had not to wash the family clothes and bedding. But what was the use of being a boy if you could not go where you liked and have some fun with other boys ?

At last he got up and went to look for " Superintendent-of-Education "—the watchman's little boy whom he generally considered too small for a big boy like him to play with. But Superintendent-of-Education, or Gau-Seu, as he was called in Chinese, had gone with his father to visit the grandparents at the ancestral home. The watchman's house was close to the big gate of the compound, and that gate was wide open. Through it Felicitous Intelligence could see down the entry lane and beyond into the street. There was nothing dull about the street. All was bustle

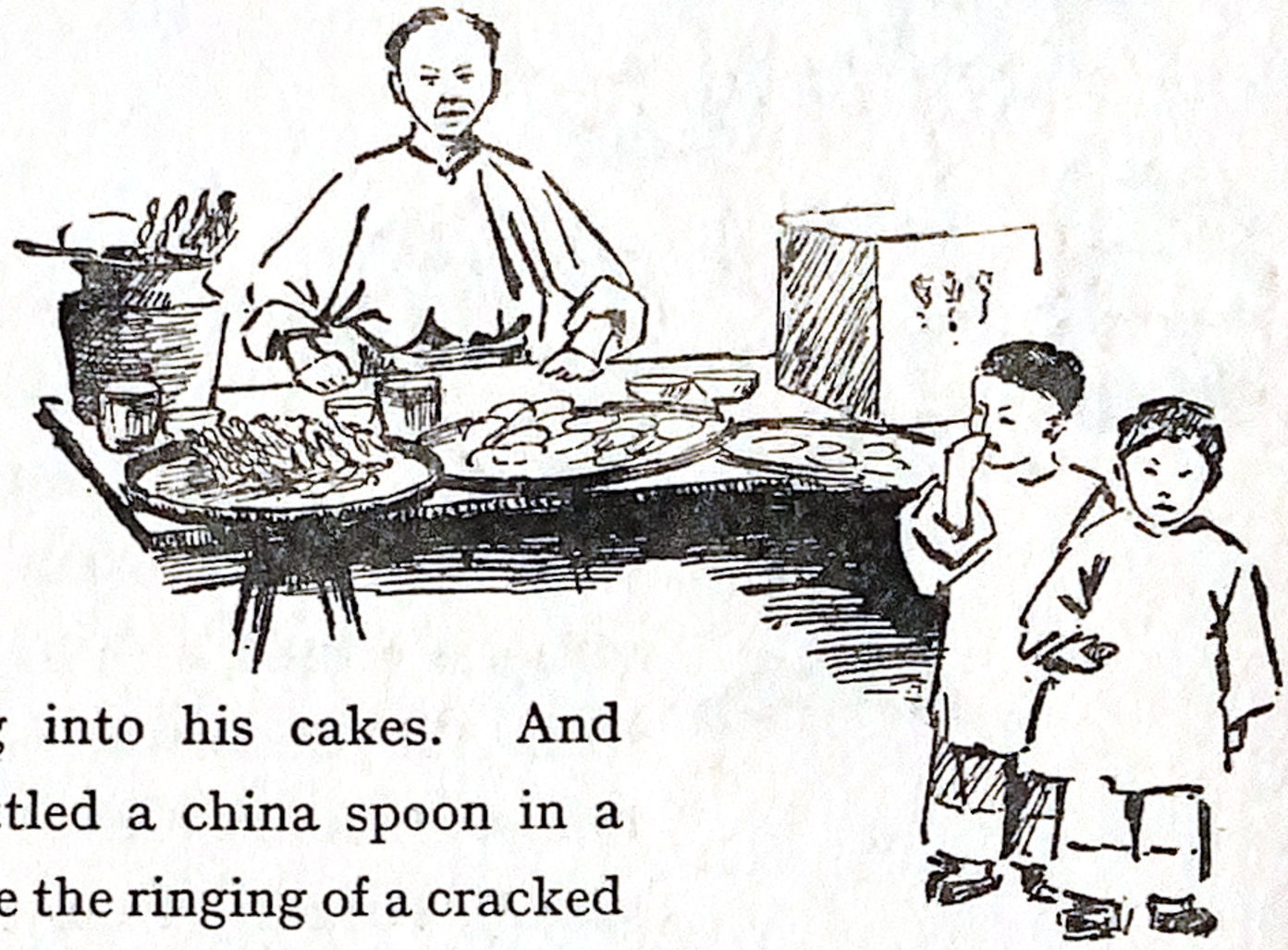
and business. Coolies passed along with loads of tea, rice, and other things hanging at each end of the bamboo carrying-poles on their shoulders; villagers passed with loads of firewood brought from the mountain near by to be sold in the city; others carried baskets of fish (fresh or salted), buckets of oysters, crates of vegetables and other eatables, and all called and cried out to the other foot-passengers:

"To one side! To one side! Empty-handed person to one side!"

There was a pedlar with his round trays piled one on top of the other, filled with silks, cloth, and hair flowers for the women, making a noise on his rattle as he went along.

"Walking with empty hands, to one side!"

There was the cake-seller with his stove and cooking pan full of hot cakes at one end of the carrying-pole, while from the other hung a small table with drawers in it containing bowls and



chop-sticks, cooking implements, rice flour, lard, pork, sugar, vegetables, and all the ingredients for making and putting into his cakes. And as he went along he rattled a china spoon in a bowl, making a sound like the ringing of a cracked bell, and called out in a funny, sing-song way:

"Fried rice-flour cakes, oyster cakes, vegetable cakes, every kind of fried cake all very hot!"

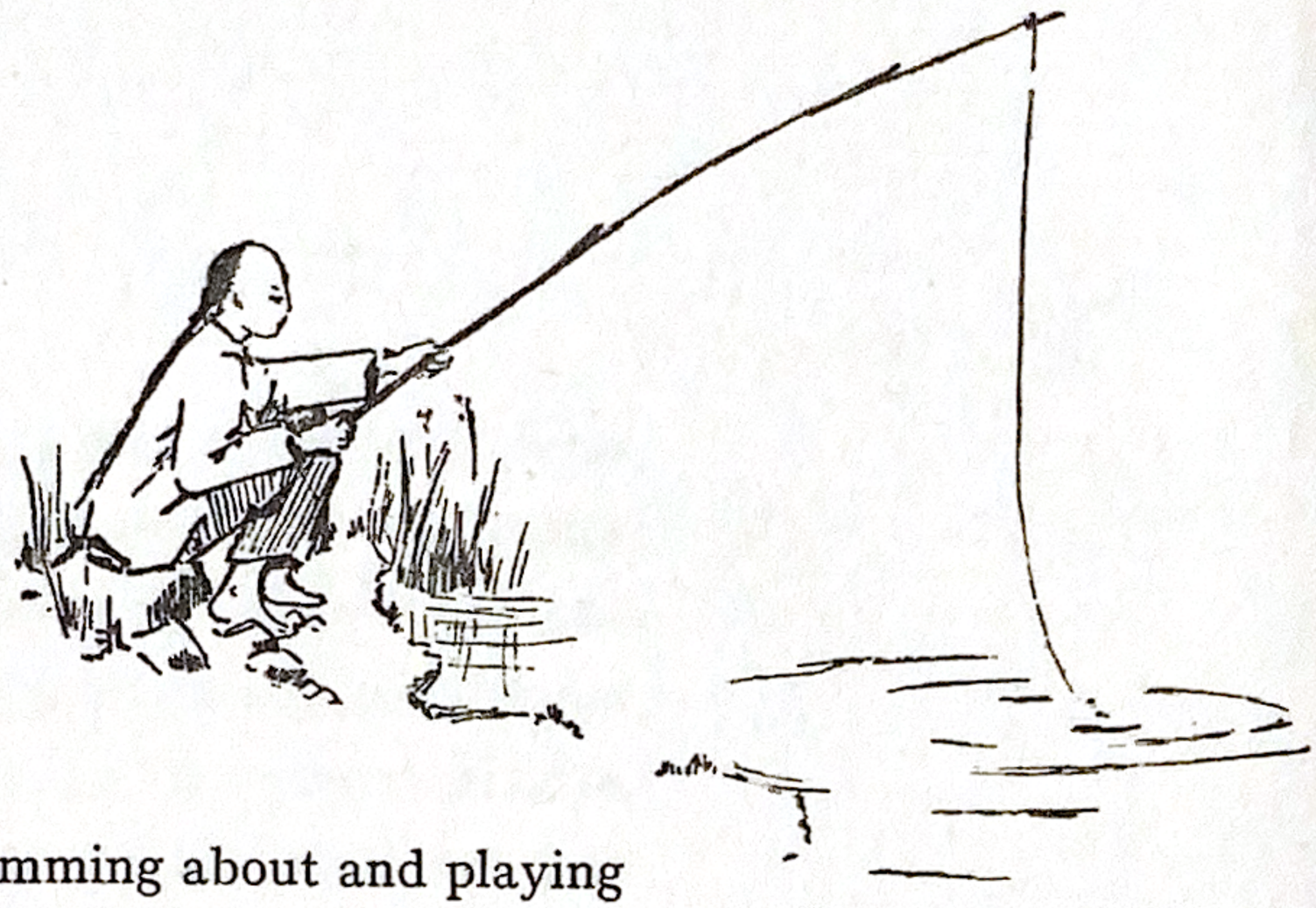
For Chinese like to eat very hot things, though on such a hot day *you* would only have wished for ices.

The rice shop at the corner of the entry lane on the near side of the street was full of customers, all men with as few clothes on as possible and most of them naked to the waist, as it was too hot for even a thin grass-cloth coat.

On the other side of the narrow street was the shallow stream which ran right through the

city. There was such a din and hubbub in the street that Felicitous Intelligence could not hear any sound of running water but he knew it was there, the only cool thing in this hot weather, and even it would soon be nearly lukewarm when the sun got high enough in the heavens to shine straight down on it. What a wonderful attraction running water has for little boys all the world over ! As Felicitous Intelligence watched the crowd at the end of the lane passing up and down the street, though he saw all the people, he thought only of the water. He ran quickly down the lane, turned the corner at the rice shop, and was soon far up the street. Another turning brought him into the main street. This led to one of the city gates and soon he was on the other side of the great wall of the city.

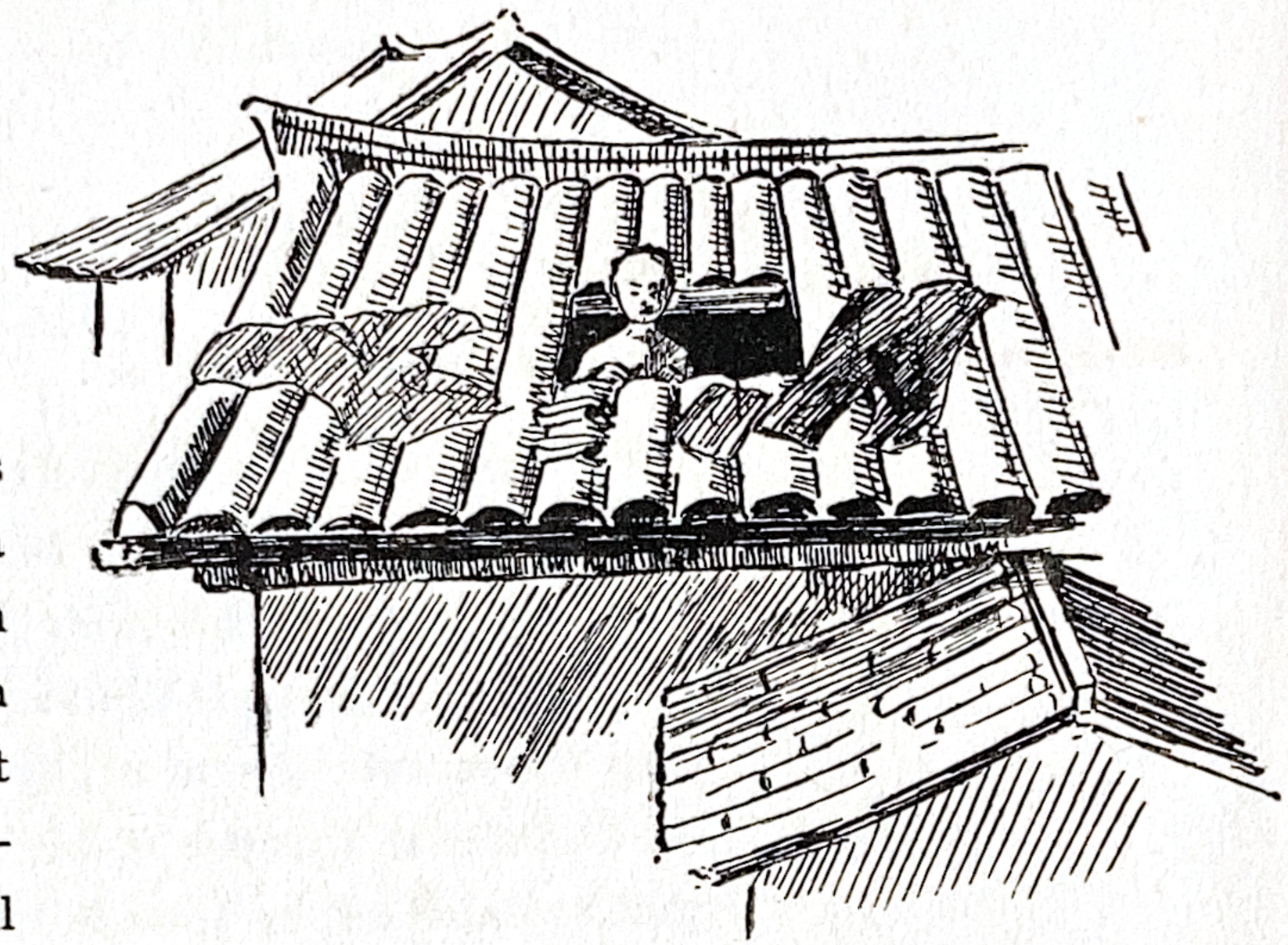
The street here looked much the same and was nearly as crowded as inside the wall, but the shops were not so fine. Felicitous Intelligence



went on till he came to a place where the stream ran clear and clean, and lots of tiny fishes could be seen swimming about and playing around the pebbles and sand at the bottom of it. From a bush at the side of the stream he cut a rod, and some coarse cotton thread from his pocket did for a line. He fished happily and patiently for a long time without catching a single fish, not even a tiny one. He had been at the edge of the wide stream and now he thought he would try if the fish in the deeper parts were easier to catch. He picked his way carefully over the stones and rocks to the very middle of the stream and was just balancing himself on two large stones when away he went, head over heels, into the water.

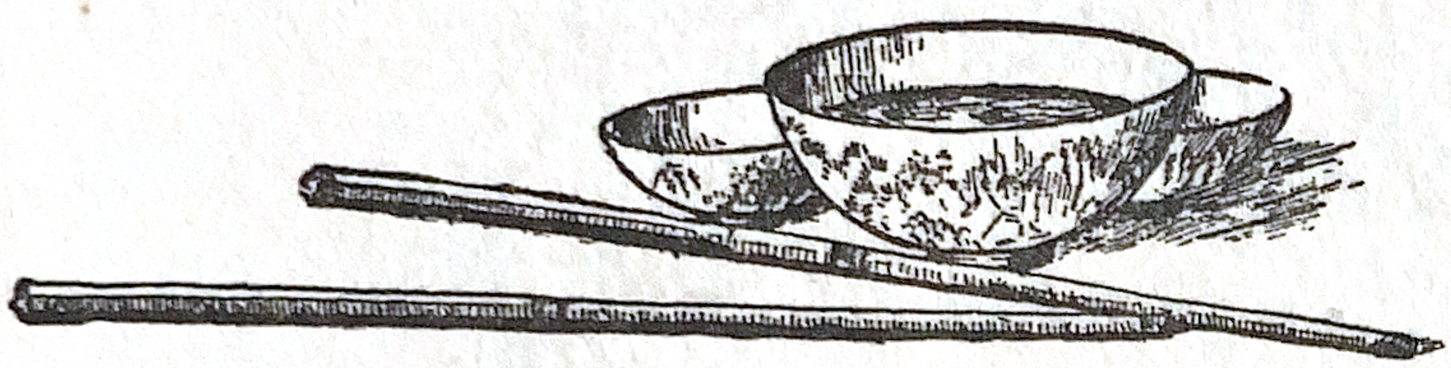
Even in the centre of the stream it was not

very deep, and Felicitous Intelligence picked himself out, a frightened, wet, and wretched little boy. His clothes were dripping and his hair was sopping ; and Chinese people hate to get their heads wet. As he wrung the water out of his clothes he thought of his mother and felt that he dared not go home in such a plight. He was very miserable indeed, and as he walked along the road he began to shiver and feel cold in his clinging wet garments, though the sun was burning fiercely and everyone else felt baked. He came to a house where there was a small loft over one side of a shop. The shopkeeper and his family were at dinner, so no one saw a little half-drowned boy dart in and climb into the dark loft. When he was safely in the first thing Felicitous Intelligence did was to take off his wet clothes and shoes and put them out on the roof to dry in the sun. As the weather was hot, he had only a thin black grass-cloth coat with



wide armholes and no sleeves, a pair of short thin blue grass-cloth trousers, a pocket which was something like a small apron hung round his neck and tied round his waist, and no socks or cap.

In the house below him he could hear the sound of chop-sticks rattling against the sides of bowls, and people talking with their mouths full, so he knew all the people of the house were at dinner. It was past noon and he had had breakfast at six o'clock that morning, so you will not be surprised to hear that he was feeling very hungry. But he was afraid to go home till his clothes were dry and anyhow he knew he did not deserve any dinner. It was very hot up in the loft so near the roof, though the roof tiles



were a welcome shelter from the sun's burning rays. Felicitous Intelligence soon began to feel very drowsy as he sat huddled up in a dark corner of his hiding-place, and he had soon forgotten all his naughtiness and trouble in a sound sleep.

At home they were too busy to think of Felicitous Intelligence till dinner-time. When the steaming rice was ready to be served, and chopsticks, saucers of relish and vinegar, bowls of hot vegetables and fish had been laid on the table, Felicitous Benevolence went to the kitchen door to call her little brother.

"Little brother, ah! Little brother, oh! Eat dinner! Eat dinner, little brother, oh!"

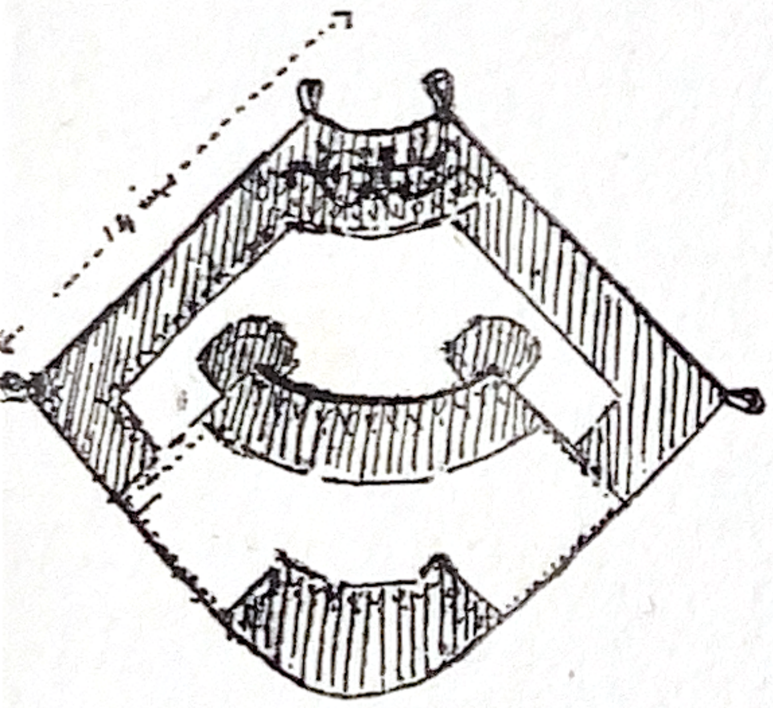
Once, twice, three times she called, her voice getting louder and shriller, but no Little Brother answered. She thought he must be asleep somewhere, so she ran about the house and out into the garden looking for him and calling; but nowhere could she find him.

Felicitous Manifestation, the big brother, had come from his place of business to pay them a short visit earlier in the day, and the mother thought he must have taken his little brother back to the shop with him. They sat down to their rice trying to think that he was safely with Felicitous Manifestation but feeling so uneasy about him that they forgot they were hungry and scarcely ate any dinner. Felicitous Benevolence put on her earrings and bracelets and went to the elder brother hoping to find the little boy ; while the mother went round to everybody on the mission premises asking if they knew where he was, or if anyone had seen him go out of the big gate.

Felicitous Manifestation was very much frightened on hearing that his little brother could not be found. But he tried to comfort his sister as he took her home again. Then he and some of his friends went out into the

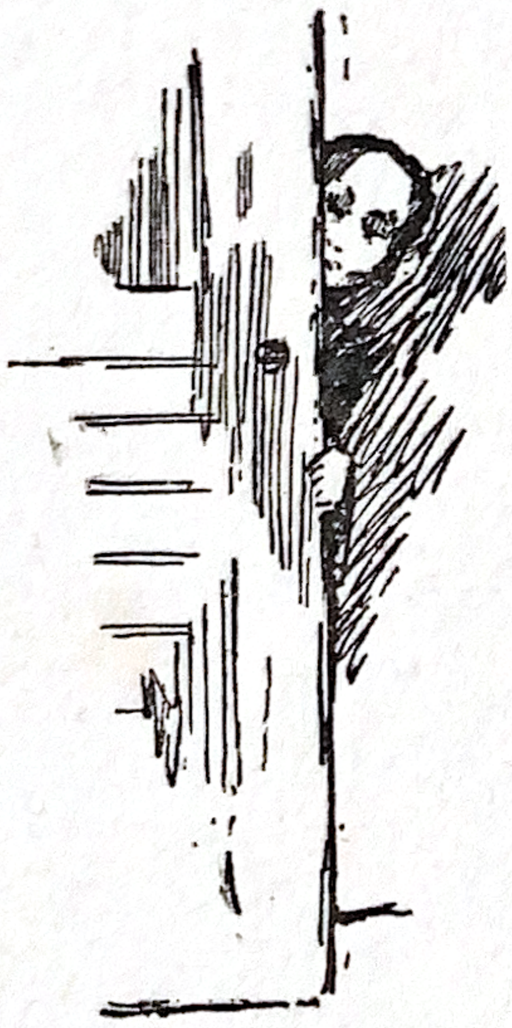
city searching in different directions till it was dark.

As the sun went down behind the mountains which stood up high all round the city Felicitous Intelligence woke up, having slept the whole afternoon, knowing nothing of his mother and sister crying for him at home, and his brother out looking for him, and everybody in a great fright. At first when he rubbed his eyes he could not think where he was, but when he looked at himself and saw that he had no clothes on he remembered all his adventures. His clothes, all except the shoes, had been well dried by the hot sun, so he put them on and prepared to go home. But now the shopkeeper was sitting in his shop just below, and Felicitous Intelligence was afraid to climb down for fear of being seen and caught as a thief. The poor little boy did not know what to do. He knew that the man would most likely put up the shutters and close the shop before



Boy's Pocket.

and afraid to move out of his hiding-place for fear of being seen. There he sat huddled up in a corner feeling more and more miserable every minute. At last he got up again and looked out of the window of the loft to see if there was any other way that he could get out and down over the roofs of the neighbouring shops. A man passing in the street saw him and called out to the shopman :



" What youngster is that you have in your loft ? I did not know you had a little boy ? "

" Little boy ? Little boy ? " said the shop-keeper, " I have no youngster in my loft."

" Well, you truly have this evening," said the other man, " for I have just seen one looking out of your loft window."

Felicitous Intelligence could hear all the men said, so he came down from the loft and stood before them.

" Truly it is the son of the Girls' School matron

eating his supper and then there would be no way of getting out.

As the man sat in his shop smoking his water-pipe, continually filling the tiny bowl for the tobacco, lighting it, puffing it out and re-filling it, nodding to those of the passers-by who knew him, and talking to those who stopped to ask if he had eaten his rice and discuss the latest news, he heard some very queer noises up in his loft. He wondered what they were and hoped it was only the rats beginning to get lively at a very early hour, and that the Fox-Devil had not got into the house. For the Chinese are very much afraid of an evil spirit they call the Fox-Devil who is supposed to steal children, or make them naughty, and who does all kinds of mischief in a house.

The miserable little boy in the loft wanted his supper and his mother very badly, but he was afraid to go home to her after being so naughty,

at the mission ladies' place ! " said the man, who was a carpenter and had done some work at the school. " What are you doing here ? "

Then Felicitous Intelligence told how he had fallen into the stream and got his clothes wet, how he had hidden in the loft and gone to sleep while waiting till they were dry.

He was very glad indeed that the shopman was not at all angry but only laughed at him and told him to be off home to his mother.

He ran the whole way home and found her at the door of the school crying for him. He never could understand why he was not punished or even scolded for that day's outing, though he had ruined a good pair of shoes besides having given his mother a terrible fright. Yet all she said was :

" You have come back ! You have come back ! Truly great thanks to God ! Great praise to God for His grace and His mercy. Great, great thanks to God ! "

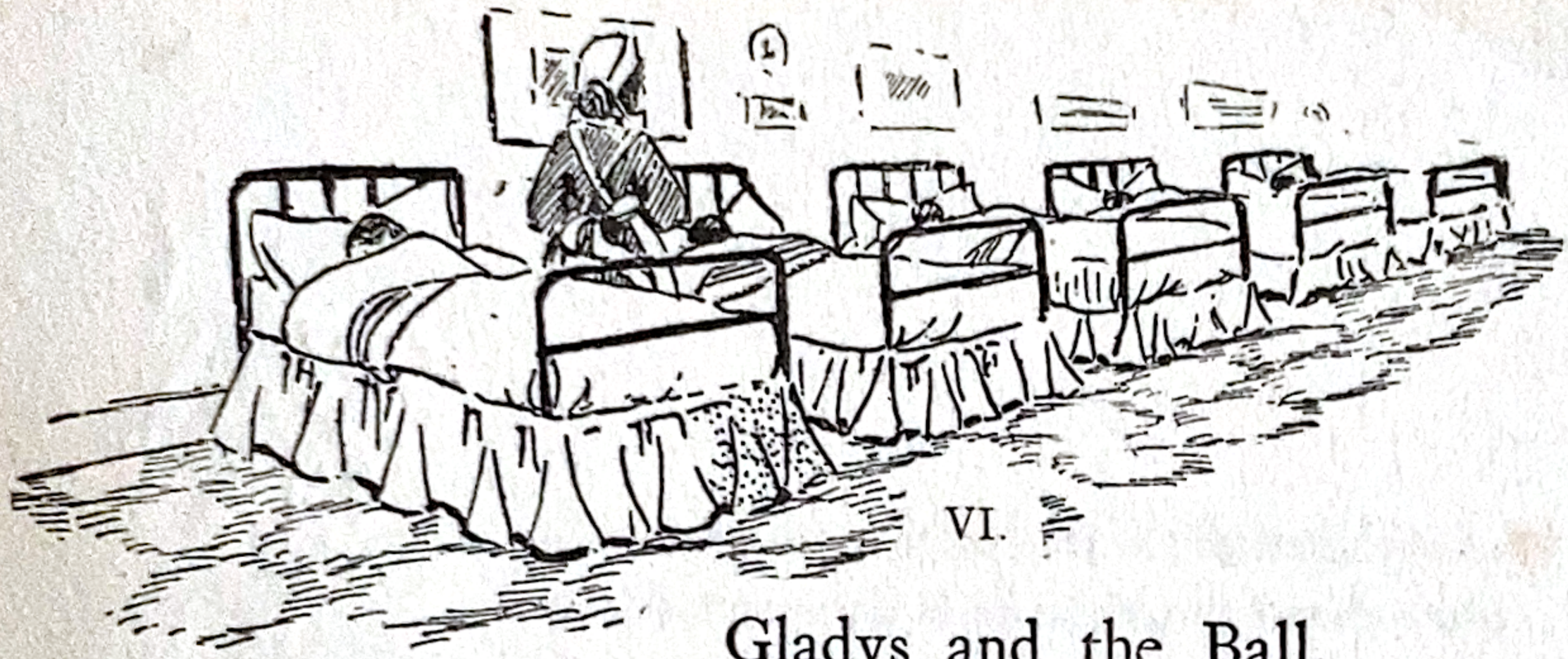
Then she sent him to bed, brought him a most splendid supper of all the things he liked best, and when he had finished eating, she listened to the story of his day's adventures, told with many tears and sobs.

She was too thankful to have him safely back to give him the punishment he so richly deserved. She had been afraid that he had been kidnapped and carried away, for that often happens in China to children who stray from their homes. And as she left him to go to sleep she said again :

" Great, great thanks to God ! "

You who read this story will know how hard it is to be always good and obedient and how easy it is to be naughty even in this Christian land where there are so many people to help you to do what is right. But in heathen lands like China, where so few people worship God and so many serve the idols and are afraid of evil spirits, it is much harder for little girls and boys to be good

and much easier to be naughty. So when you have been tempted to do what is wrong and you are thanking God for having given you strength to resist the temptation, pray too for the little girls and boys in heathen lands who love the Lord Jesus and are trying to serve Him; that they too may know His strength and power in their lives, and every day may live to His glory.



VI.

Gladys and the Ball.

ALL the other stories have been about Chinese children, but this one is different. It tells of a little Irish girl who, when she grew up and was old enough, went to China to tell the children there (and grown-up people too) of the Lord Jesus.

And this is the story of how little Gladys Thompson came to know that some day, when she was quite grown-up and big enough, He would want her to go to some far-off heathen land as His messenger.

But Gladys Thompson is not her "real true" name. I have changed it because she is a real live person and is shy of having a story about her put into a book.

Five of the Thompson children had had measles, and after the measles all five took

whooping cough ; so Mr. and Mrs. Thompson had taken them to a nice house in a pretty little village by the side of a beautiful lough or bay in Ireland, close to a range of beautiful mountains. And here they had a fine time, climbing the mountains, roaming in the woods carpeted with the largest primroses they had ever seen ; and when the weather got hot enough, paddling in the sea. When the big brothers and sisters away at boarding schools heard of it they were almost sorry they had not been at home to have measles with the others and then go away to this beautiful place. And in the summer holidays when they were all at home together again they complained that "the little ones" talked of nothing else but what they did at Ballyross. But their mother and the children's nurse found it quite enough to have five children ill, and were glad that the others were safely at school.

One beautiful bright day in spring Mr. and

Mrs. Thompson took three of the children for a long drive and picnic. They drove away on an Irish car immediately after breakfast and did not come back till late in the evening. The two youngest little girls, Gladys and Mollie, were left behind with nurse ; and as mother kissed the children good-bye, she said to Gladys :

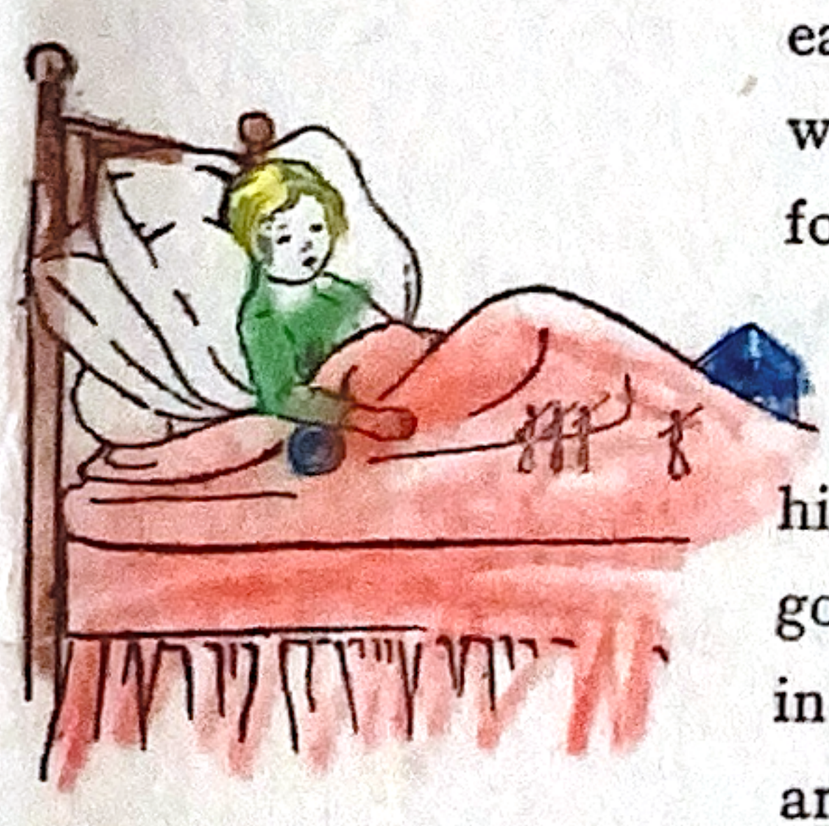
" Take great care of little Mollie and be very happy little girls all the day with nurse."

Gladys was a very ordinary-looking child with fair straight hair, blue eyes, and rosy cheeks. There were a great many freckles all over her face, and her nose was quite brown with them. She had on a blue frock with a nice white pinafore over it. Gladys was very fond of her little sister, and was quite pleased to think of having her all to herself for one whole day. Besides, she was seven years old, and felt that she was a big girl now and quite able to take good care ot both nurse and the little sister.

Mollie was a dear little girl just four years old. She had soft yellow-brown hair, deep blue eyes, pretty pink cheeks, and a dear little mouth and chin that made you want to kiss the sweet baby face. She was dressed in a dark velvet frock a little deeper blue than the colour of her eyes, and she too wore a clean white pinafore.

The two children stood hand in hand watching the car till it drove over the hill and out of sight. Then they ran into the sunny garden and played happily there all the morning till it was time for wee Mollie to have her mid-day sleep.

When Nurse came out to take Mollie in, she brought out the favourite toy for Gladys to play with so that she would not feel too lonely. This was a brightly-painted indiarubber ball. On one half of the ball was a wonderful and magnificent picture of Queen Victoria in her Jubilee robes, and on the other half were the Royal Arms. Bertie, the brother who was with them at Bally-



ross, had bought it for Mollie in the village shop and paid a whole sixpence for it—the only sixpence he had, and it was the only nice ball in the shop. Poor little Mollie had been so ill with measles and the whooping-cough that she had got very thin and white. Even when she was better she was often too tired to play, and would sit dully on mother's or nurse's knee watching the other children. But she loved her beautiful ball, and hugged Bertie again and again when he brought it to her. She often had earache too, and when this was bad the new ball was the only thing that made her smile and forget the pain for a while.

So you see how very precious it was.

Gladys threw it up into the air, trying how high she could throw it and if she could make it go up into a little white fleecy cloud which hung in the blue sky just over the garden. Higher and higher she threw it. The bright ball looked

so pretty in the sunshine and against the blue sky and white cloud. She was just thinking that though it would not go into the pretty white cloud, she could send it nearly as high as Bertie could, and he was ten years old and a boy, when down it came, this time on the wrong side of the hedge, down into a field where cows were grazing. Gladys ran quickly to the gate that led into the field and looked through. She was not afraid of the cows, but there was a great bed of nettles in the field, all down the side that was next to the garden, and she knew the ball must have dropped somewhere into those dreadful nettles.

Now Gladys had a pair of very sturdy fat legs. She knew well that they were very fat because her brothers so often teased her about them, as boys will, and called them the "family bed-posts." As it was a warm day she wore socks which only reached a little way above her

boots. She looked at her bare legs and then at the nettles. She knew they were the nasty big stinging kind, and how could she walk through them to look for the ball? What was she to do?

Bertie would not have minded the nettles but he was far away, and long before he came home the village children would be out of school. They often played in that field and perhaps they would find the precious ball and take it away, or perhaps the cows might find it and spoil it.

Nurse was upstairs in the nursery and Gladys could not go to her for fear of wakening little Mollie who was asleep there. Besides, Nurse had a way of speaking sometimes of even the very nicest toys as "truck" or "trash" unless they were in the toy-cupboard which she considered the proper place for such things. So Gladys felt that she would not be much help.

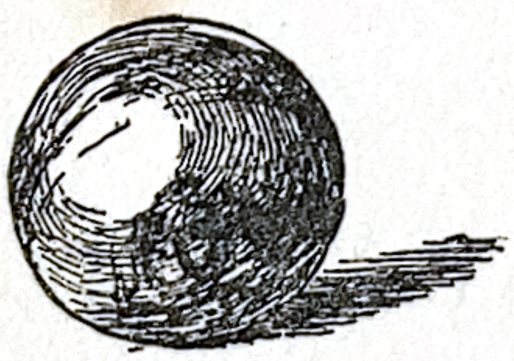
No, she must find that ball herself, and quickly too, before the rough village boys came out of school and before little Mollie wakened up and asked for it.

She opened the gate and walked into the field. The ball was nowhere to be seen and it was quite hopeless to expect to see it through the thick leaves. The nettles looked even worse when she came close to them and she stood looking first at them and then at her bare legs, feeling very miserable, while big hot tears gathered in her eyes. As she stood by the nettles, choking back the tears and trying to be brave because she was a big girl and must do everything she could to make Mollie happy till mother came home, she suddenly remembered something that father had read at prayers that morning. It came near the end of the chapter he had read from the Bible, and he had said the same words in his prayer afterwards, so she knew them quite

well. You will find the verse in the 65th chapter of Isaiah.

"And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

Gladys knew that these were God's words and that it was He who would hear and answer. She had thought them very wonderful when she had heard her father read them, and now they came back to her mind. So she thought she would ask God to help her to find the ball and to keep the nettles from stinging her legs, She folded her hands together, turned her face up to the sky, and shut her eyes. The first part of the verse said "call," but God seemed so near that she felt there was no need to shout. Even little Mollie knew the text which says "Thou God seest me," and Gladys knew He could see her and the ball too. She was just going to speak to Him when it suddenly struck her that if God



was going to hear her prayer and show her where the ball lay, she would not be able to see it if she kept her eyes shut and her face towards the sky. So she opened her eyes and looked again towards the nettles ; and there, even before she had begun to say any prayer at all, she saw a bright red speck gleaming through the dark leaves of the nettles, and knew it was the lost ball.

To reach it she had to go through several yards of nettles, but she trod them down carefully to one side and the other. She seized the precious ball and got back to the gate of the field without a single nettle sting.

Her heart was bursting with joy, not only because she had found the ball, but because it seemed so wonderful that what father had read out of the Bible had happened to her ; God had answered her, only a little girl, before she had called. She was so happy that she felt she must get alone somewhere and thank Him with all her heart.

She ran into the house and upstairs to a little bedroom which was not used and where the children were sometimes allowed to play "house" on wet days. Her favourite doll "Violet" the only one she had brought to Ballyross was sitting up on the bed exactly where she had been left the day before. Her big brown eyes stared in an annoyingly glassy and unfeeling way, so Gladys put her lying down with her face turned to the wall. Then she knelt down by the side of the bed and spoke to the Father in Heaven as she had never prayed to Him before.

Longer than she could remember she had said her prayers at her mother's or father's knee every morning and evening. It seemed as if she had always known that Jesus loved her, that she belonged to Him, and must try to please Him every day. And when quite a tiny tot she had learnt not to be afraid of the dark

because God could see her there quite as well as in the light and would take care of her and not let any evil come to her. But this day He had done such a wonderful thing for her that she could only thank Him by giving herself and all her life to Him. And as she prayed in choked and broken sentences, it seemed as if Someone was there in the room beside her, taking all she offered and telling her that one day, when she was old enough, He would want her to go and tell of His greatness and His love in some far-off land where the people had never heard of Him, and knew no better than to worship idols that were as lifeless and as stupid-looking as the dolly on the bed.

Gladys knelt by the bedside for a long time, till she was afraid nurse would be looking for her. She went downstairs feeling so happy that she must tell someone all about it; but it was nearly dinner-time and nurse was in a hurry to

get her tidied and her hands and face washed ; so there was no time then. She would have liked best to tell her mother, but she was miles away, and when she came home Gladys was in bed and sound asleep.

So she kept it all to herself and did not say a word about it even to her mother, till years afterwards when she was quite grown up, and going to China as a missionary.

* * * * *

Now these are every one " real true " stories, and what happened in this last one may even happen to all of you who read it. Some day you too may learn, just like Gladys, that though we cannot see God with our eyes yet He hears all our prayers if we only love and trust Him and listen continually for His voice.

And it may be, when you are grown up, that He will want you to go looking for greater things than red balls. For far away in heathen lands

there are men and women, boys and girls, whose souls are very precious in His sight, and He must have Christian men and women to go and seek and save them. And if He should choose you to bear witness for Him and teach His salvation and His love, then be sure He will show you the way to go and find them, just as He showed the ball to Gladys.

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